

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

March 20, 2000

Jesse Jackson's new crusade



It's all about the Benjamins

By Salim Muwakkil



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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

"... with liberty and justice for all"

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Letters

Bourgeois Eugenics

I want to debunk Kurt Vonnegut's humanist view of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, who despite being convicted of murder is still a sacred symbol to many ill-informed people ("God Bless You, Dr. Kevorkian," February 7).

Is it humanistic to be willing to step in and help a disabled person die rather than provide the means to live? Is it humanistic (or even defensible) to assist a 43-year-old woman to her death? Sherry Miller was depressed after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (not a terminal illness) and then abandoned by a husband who took her children with him. Miller needed anti-depressants and a good lawyer, not a visit from Dr. Death.

Is it humanistic to assist in the suicide of a disabled man who has been waiting for nine months for a wheelchair from his HMO? That is what Kevorkian did to Matt Johnson. Johnson's wheelchair came the day after Kevorkian's visit.

Vonnegut misses the economics behind the "right to die" movement. A lethal dose in Oregon costs as little as \$35; compare that to one day's stay in a hospital, about \$1,000. The 9th Circuit Court decision in support of physician-assisted suicide specifically targeted the handicapped as "beneficiaries," and stated that it may be acceptable for "competent, terminally ill adults to take the economic welfare of their families and loved ones into consideration" when deciding whether to live or die.

If this is humanistic, then humanism is essentially aligned with bourgeois eugenicists, social Darwinists, and Malthusian population control zealots who target disabled lives as lives not worth living.

Marta Russell
Los Angeles

Too Much Sun

Eric Weltman asserts that solar energy remains a relatively minor player in the U.S. energy mix because evil Republicans and the fossil fuel industry conspired against it ("Here Comes the Sun," February 7). I would suggest that solar energy technologies have such a small market share because they are too expensive. In the mid-'70s when environmentalists, myself included, selected renewable energy as "the answer to our energy problems," we believed that the cost of fossil fuels would continue to escalate to the point that solar energy technologies would look like a bargain. We were wrong.

Rather than picking technologies for the future, environmentalists should stick to what they do best: crafting the principles by which human civilization can coexist with the natural world, and lobbying the government to

incorporate those principles into criminal, civil and tax laws.

For example, a useful principle might be that no one should have the right to freely use the public atmosphere to dispose of harmful combustion by-products. Based on that principle, government might then enact taxes on combustion by-products or ban them altogether. Entrepreneurs could then be relied on to do what they do best: produce a variety of technologies that take advantage of the government's laws. This approach has got to be better than picking a technology based on its idealized attributes and then forcing people to buy it.

Jay Stein
Boulder, Colorado

Missed Opportunity

Joshua Rothkopf's review of *Cradle Will Rock* was disappointing ("Sentimental Journey," February 7). Culture and politics are inextricably linked, and this movie captures that spirit in a complex and textured way. One would think this could be a prime opportunity for *In These Times* to engage the real political issues addressed in this film and discuss the nuances involved in the expression (and repression) of art, the tension between art and patronage, what the WPA represented to artists at that time, and the relevancy that all this has to the current cutbacks in government sponsorship of art. Instead, we get a passionless, glossed-over review that fails to capture the spirit of the movie.

Most troubling was Rothkopf's misinterpretation of the final sequence that began with the camera focusing on Diego Rivera's mural. This did not "imply the tenacious remnants of hope." If he had realized that that final piece of the mural left standing was a syphilis cell, he would have understood the symbolism that Tim Robbins was injecting into the film. The syphilis cell represents degeneration, internal decay, the powerful elite who effectively ended the WPA project.

Today, as the National Endowment for the Arts gets chiseled away by these same elites, we should embrace works of art like *Cradle Will Rock* and use them to engage in broader discussions.

Christina D. Weber
Jonathan A. Roren
Buffalo, New York

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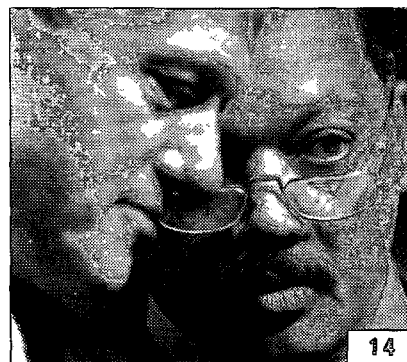
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Cover photo: John Zich/Newsmakers

Ready, Aim, Inform

The Clinton administration prepares for information warfare

During last year's war against Serbia, the White House discovered that the bombing campaign was not backed up by any coordinated attempt to sell U.S. policy to foreign audiences. So last April, President Clinton, through a secret presidential directive, established the International Public Information (IPI) "core group" to "implement a more deliberate and well-developed international public information strategy." The group consists of officials from the CIA, FBI, and State, Treasury, Commerce, Justice and Defense departments

According to a draft of the IPI charter obtained by the *Washington Times*, the core group's mission is to counteract enemy propaganda, "to prevent and mitigate crises and to influence foreign audiences in ways favorable to the achievement of U.S. foreign-policy objectives." According to the charter, the IPI will control all "international military information" to influence "the emotions, motives, objective reasoning and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups and individuals." The aim of all this is "to enhance U.S. security, bolster America's economic prosperity and to promote democracy abroad."

Critics fear that this new master spin agency is a government attempt to overtly apply psyop (psychological operations) techniques on both the world and American public using communication strategies refined by the PR industry. IPI's proponents say it is better to fight a war with words than bullets, but that to do so requires some central coordination.

The IPI has assumed many of the functions of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), which was disbanded last October, and operates out of a new Public Diplomacy branch of the State Department. As Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy Evelyn Lieberman explained on *CNN Worldview*: "This is an opportunity for us to join the tools of traditional diplomacy with the tools of public diplomacy, and talk to foreign publics about American foreign policy and democracy in new ways and in ways that are appropriate for our new wired world."

Others in the foreign policy establishment are not so sanguine. Michael Waller of the American Foreign Policy Council told *Worldview*, "It's just going to be a propaganda machine for our diplomats."

The *Washington Times*' Ben Barber reported last July that a former senior Clinton administration official who requested anonymity said that administration officials believe "news coverage is distorted at home and they need to fight it at all costs by using resources that are aimed at spinning the news." The former official, who had close knowledge of the plan's development, said this "new multiagency plan to control the dissemination of public information abroad was really aimed at spinning the American public. ... This has



By Joel Bleifuss

been in the works a long time. The target is the American people."

Indeed the draft charter of the IPI advises that information aimed at U.S. audiences should "be coordinated, integrated, deconflicted and synchronized with the IPI Core Group to achieve a synergistic effect."

The former director of the USIA, Joseph Duffey, opposed the plans to subsume his agency into the State Department. According to the *Washington Times*, in 1997 he wrote to Richard

Leone, the president of the Twentieth Century Fund Foundation, expressing concern about the IPI's ability to keep information campaigns targeted at foreign audiences separate from those aimed at domestic audiences. He cited a "USIA Reorganization Team" memorandum warning that "foreign information programs inevitably have some 'spill over' or 'blow back' effects here at home."

Gene Kopp, former deputy chief of the USIA under Nixon, Ford and Bush, also worries that the public diplomacy campaigns will be directed at the American public. "The temptation to spin this stuff in a partisan way will be very strong—probably irresistible," he told the *Washington Times*. "The other ominous feature is that this includes the intelligence agencies. They are in the business of misinformation. God only knows where that goes."

If information technology can function as a tool of the oppressed, it can just as easily serve the oppressor.

Much of this IPI criticism come from the right, advanced by the *Washington Times*, a right-wing paper published by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. The Heritage Foundation's Ariel Cohen, for example, fears a left-wing conspiracy. He told the *Washington Times* last July: "It cannot be driven by any political-correctness agenda that will not be representative of what the American people think or that will re-elect only a social-change agenda of extremist activist groups."

Cohen perhaps has reasons to be concerned. The IPI draft charter was written by Jamie Metzl, who in previous scholarly writings has expressed solidarity with the work of Internet groups like BurmaNet and East Timor Action, as well as organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Metzl, 37, is currently coordinator of IPI. (He did not respond to a phone call from *In These Times*.)

Metzl has worked most recently as an aide to National Security Council "terrorism czar" Dick Clarke. Metzl holds a doctorate in Southeast Asian studies from Oxford and a law degree from Harvard. A former U.N. Human Rights Officer and the author of *Western Responses to Human Rights Abuses in*

Cambodia, 1975-80, he believes information is power and that information, when wielded correctly, can do great good.

In a 1996 issue of *Human Rights Quarterly*, he provides human rights activists with a primer on "harnessing information technology for the benefit of human rights." He offers helpful tips, such as encouraging human rights Web sites to provide viewers with suggestions "regarding action which can be taken." Citing the work of progressive political philosopher Benjamin Barber, Metzl notes that "developments in communications have given wings to systems which destroy diversity and foster capitalist-defined cultural uniformity. ... While international capitalism might wish to mold individuals as passive consumers susceptible to mass advertising campaigns, supporters of human rights would wish to use information technology systems to give voice to the voiceless and access to the disadvantaged." But he cautions: "If information technology can function as a tool of the oppressed, it can just as much serve the oppressor—'technologies of freedom' can just as easily become technologies of abuse."

Similarly, in a 1997 *Foreign Affairs* article, Metzl advocates using information warfare to prevent "humanitarian disasters." "Mass media reach not only people's homes, but also their minds, shaping their thoughts and sometimes their behavior," he writes. He points out that radio was used "to propagate Nazi ideology and spur genocide in Rwanda"; and in the former Yugoslavia, radio and television were instrumental "in fomenting ethnic animosity and bloodshed." "Countering such incendiary transmissions systematically, using information warfare techniques, will go a long way toward securing human rights short of costly, large-scale military interventions," he concludes.

Metzl's more current thoughts on information warfare can be found in the Summer 1999 issue of *The Washington Quarterly*. In that article, Metzl urges making all future wars PR battles, thus mitigating the need for armed intervention.

This is not altogether a bad idea—better to be hit with propaganda than bombs. The examples Metzl uses, however, illustrate the problems inherent in the IPI policy.

Metzl points to the August 1998 bombing of a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan as an information war the United States lost, because much of world public opinion turned against the U.S. action. "Although the U.S. government's policy was sound, presenting it became all the more difficult in this more hostile environment," he writes.

That hostile environment included some quarters of the Clinton administration. The *New York Times*' James Risen reported in October 1999 that on the eve of the attack "senior diplomatic and intelligence officials had argued strenuously over whether any target in Sudan should be attacked."

In the aftermath of the bombing, Risen reports, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and a senior deputy "encouraged State Department intelligence to kill a report being drafted that concluded that the bombing was not justified." An administration official, who says the United States may have made a mistake, told Risen, "As an American citizen, I am not convinced of the evidence."

Another information battle the United States lost, according to Metzl, was over its refusal to sign the international treaty to ban land mines. Instead, the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines carried the day. "Had the government recognized the potential influence of these NGOs," Metzl writes, "it might partially have attempted to strike a deal with them early in the



SALAH OMAR/AFP

The United States destroyed a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan, but lost the information war.

process whereby the United States would commit its tremendous resources to building consensus for such a ban provided that a specific class of mines used in Korea would be excluded."

Clearly, despite assurances from the State Department, IPI's information arsenal will be aimed at U.S. citizens—how can it not be? As Metzl himself points out in *The Washington Quarterly*: "In foreign affairs, just as in economics, success will belong to those who internalize the lessons of an increasingly open global system." One of those lessons is that government cannot send one message to the international press corps and another to domestic media.

There is nothing new about the U.S. government deceiving the public about bad policies or strategic blunders. They are by nature hard to defend, even with the best PR, as one administration after another has demonstrated. What's new is that the administration is preparing to use different techniques to convince a world audience that U.S. might makes right. Metzl writes, "The models for its effective use are plainly available in political and mass advertising campaigns: state a goal, determine the audience, test messages or products with that audience, and then constructively engage that audience."

Ready, aim, inform. ■

Flub Watch

Perhaps more than ever before, this year's mainstream media coverage of the presidential race is all about image: how it is created by candidates, manipulated by spin doctors and perceived by the public. Lost in all of this is nearly any substantial examination of each candidate's policies or how they would affect the public.

Of course, when all that matters is image, journalists have a whole lot of power. This power has been clearly demonstrated in the national news media's curious predilection to falsely attribute damning statements to Vice President Al Gore—and then use those very same inventions to question his integrity.

The most recent example of this was all the attention devoted in December to Gore's alleged claim to have first exposed Love Canal, the infamous toxic subdivision in upstate New York. It all started with a speech the vice president gave to a group of Concord, New Hampshire high school students on November 30. Ceci Connolly of the *Washington Post* reported on it this way: "Gore boasted about his efforts in Congress 20 years ago to publicize the dangers of toxic waste. 'I found a little place in upstate New York called Love Canal,' he said. ... 'I was the one who started it all.'" The *New York Times* printed the same quote.

The Republican National Committee quickly jumped on the story and issued a press release. "It's a pattern of phoniness," RNC Chairman Jim Nicholson said. "It would be funny if it weren't also a little scary." The pundits then chimed in. On CNBC's *Hardball*, Chris Matthews sneered: "He's now the guy who created the Love Canal. ... I mean, isn't this getting ridiculous? ... Isn't it getting to be delusional?" ABC's Cokie Roberts, George Stephanopoulos and Bill Kristol followed suit, as did the editorial writers at the *New York Post*, the *Buffalo News* and the *Washington Times*.

There's just one problem: Gore never said it. Instead, he told the story of a girl from Toone, Tennessee, who alerted him in the late '70s to the problems of a local

toxic waste dump. "I called for a congressional investigation and a hearing," Gore told the students. "I looked around the country for other sites like that. I found a little place in upstate New York called Love Canal. Had the first hearing on that issue, and Toone, Tennessee—that was the one that you didn't hear of. But that was the one that started it all."

Robert Parry reports in his magazine *American Dispatches* (www.americandispatches.com) that Concord High School students themselves lobbied the *Post* and the *Times* to admit their mistakes. After balking, both papers eventually published decontextualized

added to the list of Gore's earlier "gaffes"—his claims to be the inspiration for a main character in *Love Story* and inventor of the Internet, for instance—that were exaggerated to ridicule him. Few bothered to compare these statements with the truth: *Love Story* author Erich Segal did partly model the main male character on Gore, and the vice president did play a leading role as a congressman in supporting the development of the Internet. But that didn't stop the *Providence Journal* from proclaiming: "Perhaps it is time to wonder what it is that impels Vice President Gore to make such preposterous claims, time and again."

Perhaps it is. This entire episode raises troubling questions about this year's election and the health of our democracy. The point isn't that Gore would necessarily make a good president, or even that he's the only one get-

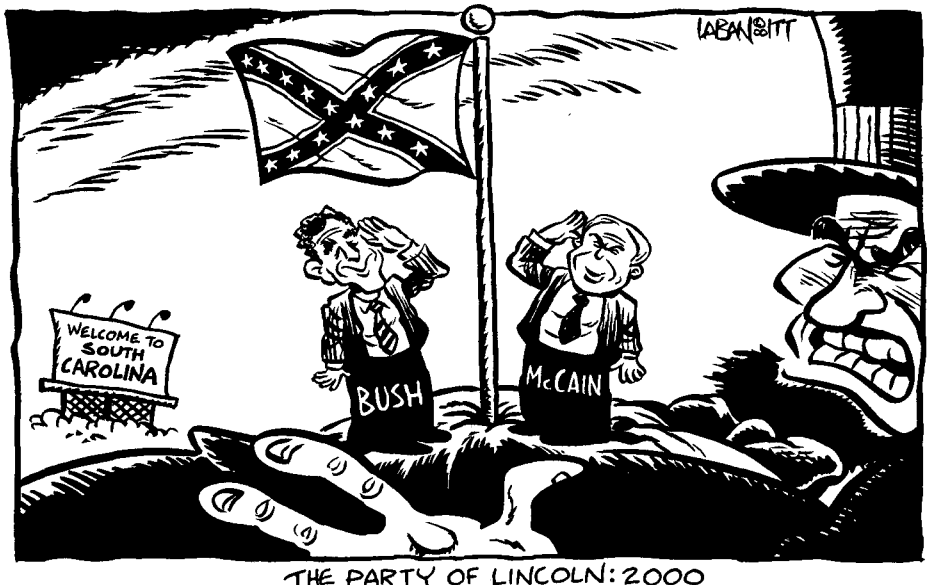
Instead of challenging the candidates on where they would lead the country, the media obsess over image.

retractions. "They fixed how they misquoted him, but they didn't tell the whole story," Lindsey Roy, a Concord High junior, told Parry.

Yet even after this correction, the Love Canal "gaffe" continued to echo. It was mentioned in the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* and *The National Journal* (and even *In These Times*). The misquote was

getting a raw deal. (Consider this recent *New York Times* headline: "Bush loses luster in a poll as Gore sheds poor image.") Rather, how can voters have any hope of expressing an informed judgment when the media, instead of challenging the candidates on where they would lead this country, just obsess over their flubs and blunders? ■

Terry LaBan



Things Fall Apart

Tony Blair bungles the peace process in Northern Ireland

By G. Pascal Zachary

BELFAST—The collapse of a power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland—and the reimposition of direct rule from Britain—must seem like a form of collective madness to Americans accustomed to all manner of compromise and co-optation in their domestic politics. Having come so far—republican Sinn Féin sitting alongside Ulster unionists, under the approving eyes of both the British and Irish governments—how could the whole thing unravel the week-end before Valentine's Day?

The simple explanation, of course, is that Catholics and Protestants in the North still don't trust one another. The February crisis is only the latest reminder of their inability to forge a practical partnership. For observers, this failure is reassuring in a perverse way: Ethnic and religious differences really are too big for some places to cope with, which leaves some intractable disputes essentially beyond fixing.

This view, however appealing, is wrong. Neither Catholics nor Protestants, republicans nor unionists are to blame for the uncertain stalemate in Northern Ireland. Britain is.

Internal British politics usually have no effect on international affairs. But to understand the standoff in Northern Ireland, the domestic policies of British Prime Minister Tony Blair must be explored. Blair has embarked on what he considers a seminal shift away from centralized government and toward a system of "devolved" power somewhat akin to the U.S. arrangement between states and the federal government. In Britain's case, the first areas to be treated as "states" are Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Blair considers "devolution" central to modernizing Britain and expanding citizen democracy in a country that still lacks a bill of rights, automatic judicial review of parliamentary laws, direct election of any important political positions and basic

access to information about government decisions and private-property ownership.

On paper, devolution is certainly to be welcomed; it may even be a first step toward the independence of Scotland and Wales. But that is the problem. So far, Blair has shown an abstract attachment to decentralization, but a primal, clearly hypocritical passion to remain in control of all Britain. He wants to hand-pick the new mayor of London, despite backing the creation of this directly elected position. The first chief of the Welsh assembly was a Blair lackey, who so lost credibility that he was forced out of office the very week that the Northern Ireland peace process came undone.

Blair's addiction to what the London papers call "control freakery" is probably the chief reason why he can't do the right thing in Northern Ireland, which is to tell the unionists that they must make reasonable concessions to republicans if they wish to remain part of Britain. To get his message across, Blair

Republican and unionist politicians are so self-absorbed, after 30 years of violent wrangling, that it is easy for them to overlook the way that issues internal to Britain continue to shape events in Northern Ireland. Britain remains the prime mover in any basic settlement. This has two implications, one good and the other not.

The first is that the divided communities of Northern Ireland are far closer together than at any time since the outbreak of communal violence in the late '60s. The suspension of power-sharing isn't likely to result in escalating political violence. It also won't sidetrack the scores of official and unofficial efforts at healing the wounds between Catholics and Protestants in the North.

The second implication is that "decommissioning" is a sideshow. This awkward term refers to a commitment—never actually stated in the so-called "Good Friday" agreement, which serves as the basis for the peace process—that the IRA



PAUL FAITH/AFIP

must even threaten to pull Britain out of Northern Ireland if loyalist extremists continue to spurn what is certainly their best hope at striking a deal between Ulster's unionists and republicans.

But Blair can't talk tough to unionists because his whole "devolution" goal is to deepen the attachment of regions such as Scotland and Wales to London. In Blair's reasoning, the departure of British troops and the failure of power-sharing in Northern Ireland could simply be a prelude to the breakup of Britain, with the independence of Scotland and Wales spelling the final end of empire.

would give up its weapons by this June. The IRA's failure to give up any weapons so far—or even to outline a timetable in which it would do so—almost fractured the first power-sharing executive last fall and seemingly remains the biggest single obstacle to the resumption of power-sharing and meaningful peace talks.

Why the IRA won't give up any weapons isn't clear, since even a small surrender of weapons would have big symbolic value. Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams has suffered greatly from his failure to move the IRA to a more flexible position on weapons. His central



UNITED STUDENTS AGAINST SWEATSHOPS, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Student Sit-in Victorious: On February 13, members of the United Students Against Sweatshops ended their seven-day occupation of University of Pennsylvania President Judith Rodin's office. Rodin agreed to withdraw Penn from the Fair Labor Association. Students say the FLA is a PR tool for corporations that covers up labor abuse. Instead, they want Penn to join the Worker Rights Consortium, a coalition of universities that allows human rights groups to monitor working conditions in apparel factories.

position in the negotiations is based on his influence with the IRA, yet he has been forced repeatedly to say he can't move the military organization on the weapons issue. David Trimble, the leader of the unionists, has taken an inflexible "no guns, no government" position, which the British have backed even at the cost of the embarrassing suspension of power-sharing.

Experts on civil war will say that parties rarely surrender weapons before a practical peace takes shape. The demand for "decommissioning" is thus silly and counterproductive. The public, which under British law actually has little to do in the formal peace process, seems to understand this. As one Protestant businessman told me recently, "Let the weapons rust."

By pushing the IRA to surrender its weapons, Britain unfortunately distracts attention from the real obstacle to power-sharing in Northern Ireland: how devolution will play out across Britain. If Britain's attempt at U.S.-style federalism genuinely succeeds—overcoming Blair's own neurotic fears—this will do more to resolve Northern Ireland's divisions than all manner of decommissioning. ■

Nothing To Lose

Mexican students regroup after police eject strikers from campus

By Robert Downing

MEXICO CITY—On February 6, President Ernesto Zedillo—fresh from a trip to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland—appeared on television and radio to denounce the "privatization" of one of the nation's most treasured resources, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Early that morning, the federal police had removed student strikers from the main campus, he emphasized, because they had turned the university into their own "private property."

But unlike the American bankers cementing their control over Mexican oil, the students weren't able to garner much profit from their takeover of public property. Their nine-month occupation

of UNAM was notable for turning the vast campus into a ghost town, as most of the school's 280,000 students stayed away and remained oblivious to the demands of the Strike General Council (CGH), an assembly of 120 students that represent various colleges and preparatory high schools in the UNAM system.

The announcement of a drastic tuition hike in February 1999 had brought together many sectors of the student population. Up to that point, students had paid only a few cents per semester, and the new tuition would have cost around \$100—a staggering amount in a country where 28 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty. Students also argued that the increase was illegal. The Mexican Constitution of 1917 guarantees that all state-sponsored education will remain free. Students organized assemblies, partially shut down the school on two occasions, and finally initiated a full strike on April 19—though many were opposed to it.

In June, Francisco Barnes de Castro, the school's presiding chancellor, added the word "voluntary" to the new tuition plan. Most people assumed that the students had triumphed. But the strike continued as the CGH pressed the administration to fulfill its demands: the return of automatic admission for students of UNAM-affiliated high schools, the elimination of user fees in campus libraries and labs, a ban on standardized entrance and exit exams developed by private companies, the establishment of a student congress with the power to make and enforce resolutions, and general amnesty for the strikers.

Though the CGH was able to organize periodic marches with 5,000 to 10,000 participants, solidarity waned over time as sympathetic students became frustrated with the CGH's chaotic democracy and faced pressure from nervous parents. With the campus empty and the media screaming for Zedillo to "apply the law," the movement stalled. One sympathetic theater major wanted classes to resume and the CGH to work on organizing students. "If we were there," she said, "they could convince us of their demands."

Devoid of broad student support or dialogue with the stonewalling administration, the strikers had no other strategy but to wait for the federal

police, whose impending arrival was always the principle topic of conversation. A pretext for state intervention came about when new chancellor Juan Ramon de la Fuente staged a student referendum in January. More than 87 percent of 180,000 voters supported the administration's proposal—to end the strike and then begin dialogue.

Mexicans still remember 1968, when UNAM students protesting the dictatorial PRI regime—which had just broken their strike—were run down by the army in Mexico City's Tlateloco Plaza. Three hundred students were slaughtered, just three weeks before the Olympics.

This time, the relatively calm evacuation of the sleepy strikers from campus—at 6:30 on a Sunday morning, during one of the CGH's characteristi-



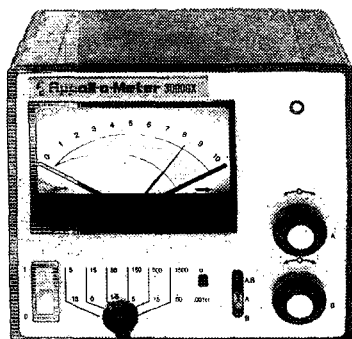
Demonstrations now focus on the imprisonment of 262 students.

cally interminable assemblies—was followed by the detention of nearly 1,000 students, some of whom are being held without bail as "social threats." On February 14, the first day of classes since last spring, a CGH march of thousands of students, parents and union members reentered the main campus to attempt to revive the strike, at least until the 262

prisoners are released. The colleges were held by anti-strike students, whom protesters jeered as "castrated youth."

But it is easier to rally conscientious Mexicans against the police state than to strategize how the movement should proceed. Some CGH supporters say no one should return to a school taken by force, while others want to go back to a working university to organize and establish a democratic student congress.

Economics professor Alfredo Velarde believes the students will move forward without regret. "This movement is of the excluded," he says. "Education in Mexico is no longer a factor in social mobility. The generation of the CGH has nothing to lose." ■



Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle

reports that Fraser's, a London business specializing in autographs and other memorabilia, is now offering for sale a single strand of John F. Kennedy's hair,

tastefully mounted alongside a photo of the dead president. The hair, trimmed from the president's head by presidential barber Harry Gelbert four months before Kennedy's assassination, offers discerning collectors a "rare opportunity to purchase an unusual piece of presidential memorabilia, which actually dates from the period when he was president," a Fraser's spokesman explained. (As opposed to, say, after he was dead.)

My Favorite Nazi 6.8

It seems Pat Buchanan has taken umbrage at the international criticism of Austrian politician Jörg Haider, a not exactly progressive thinker who has had the occasional good thing to say about Hitler. To Buchanan, the criticism of Haider indicates that we live in a world overrun with PC liberals and worse: "It is an indication, I think, that any candidate of the right can expect universal hostilities."

Monkey Trial Offer -5.7

A rare piece of good news in Appaloland: Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmonson has ruled that the Oklahoma Textbook Committee cannot require state public schools to put a "disclaimer" on science textbooks stating that evolution is a "controversial" theory. The disclaimer stickers, which did not actually get put in any books, were to read: "No one was present when life first appeared on Earth."

Therefore, any statement about life's origins should be considered theory, not fact." Welcome to the 20th century, Oklahoma! Perhaps sometime in the next hundred years or so you'll be able to make it into the 21st with the rest of us.

Billy Clubbed 5.3

New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has already played art critic; now he's extending his critical reach to popular music. After Hillary Rodham Clinton's handlers warmed up the crowd gathered to hear her Senate campaign kickoff speech by inadvertently playing Billy Joel's song "Captain Jack" over the PA system, Rudy proclaimed that his political rival was trying to corrupt the minds of innocent New Yorkers. "The song," he announced on a Rochester radio station, "encourages young people to use drugs and masturbate." Possibly even at the same time, which can cause injuries.

Hair Today 7.3

A little snippet of Camelot can now be yours—for only \$800. Reuters



TERRY LABAN

No Mercy

California's juvenile justice system could become one of the nation's toughest

By Christian Parenti

SAN FRANCISCO—A new wave of adolescents may soon find themselves in the very cruel world of adult prison. On March 7, Californians will vote on Proposition 21, the "Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act," which would completely overhaul the state's juvenile justice system—making it one of the toughest in the nation.

Authored by the California District Attorneys Association and local sheriffs, this audacious initiative was placed on the ballot with the blessings of former Republican Gov. Pete Wilson, who solicited hefty donations from a raft of Fortune 500 companies, including Chevron, Hilton and Pacific Gas & Electric. With corporate contributions ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 a pop, Wilson quickly racked up three-quarters of a million dollars.

But the initiative also has a momentum of its own. Over the past 20 years, Californians have approved a series of tough-on-crime measures, and that fact alone means defeating Prop 21 will require a Herculean effort. "Everything about this law is bad—really bad," says Rose Braz, program director of Critical Resistance and an activist with the FreedomWinter Coalition, which is mobilizing against the measure. "This will ruin families, psychologically mangle thousands of youth and cost tax payers literally billions of dollars."

Listening to the advocates of Prop 21, however, the initiative sounds like a firm-but-fair reworking of a failed system. Despite a 20 percent decline in juvenile crime over the past decade, Matt Ross, campaign manager of Californians to End Gang Violence, calls for more repression. "This is a great thing!" he exclaims. "We have violent gangs in the rural areas of the Central Valley where they were unheard of five, 10 years ago. We have to deal with that."

What will Prop 21 really do? One of the law's most aggressive features would strip judges of their power to determine if a juvenile offender should go to adult prison. Instead, prosecutors alone would

make that decision. What's more, any minor over age 16 convicted in adult court would automatically be sent to state prison. The new law also would relax the legal definition of a gang, double sentences for alleged gang members, greatly expand police abilities to use wiretaps, and make vandalism convictions causing damages of \$400 or more a felony (carrying a year or more in prison). Prop 21 also would end "confidentiality" for juvenile convictions—meaning that people who commit felonies as teens would be tagged with criminal records for life.

The California Legislative Analysts office, the state's equivalent of the GAO, estimates the cost of building new prisons and hiring additional law enforcement personnel under Prop 21 could reach \$750 million, with ongoing operational costs of as much as \$330 million annually. A large share of that bill would fall on city and county jails forced to hold thousands more youth offenders before conviction.

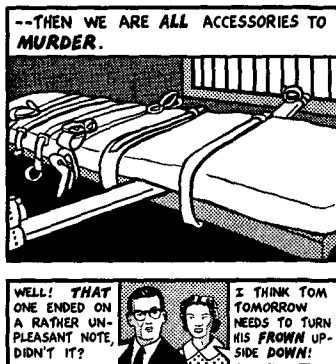
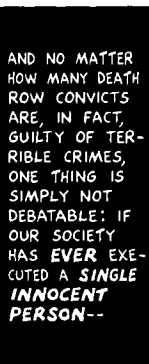
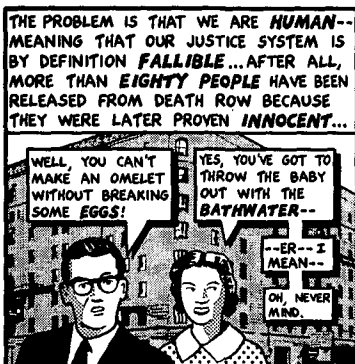
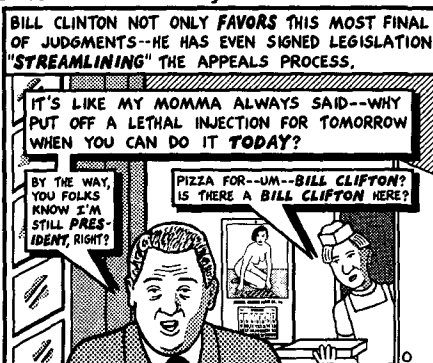
As for effectiveness, the analysts point out that "juveniles who receive an adult court sanction tend to commit more crimes and return to prison more often than those sent to juvenile facilities." The U.S. Department of Justice concurs, noting that compared to youth kept in juvenile facilities, those sent to adult lockups are eight times more likely to commit suicide, five times more likely to be raped and 50 times more likely to be attacked with a weapon.

The emerging sketch of a moral and financial disaster has created some prominent, mainstream opponents of the measure, including Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles and the California Catholic Conference of Bishops, California's chief probation officer, the majority of the state's juvenile judges, the National Black Police Officers Association, the California PTA, and, surprisingly, Los Angeles Police Chief Bernard Parks, who calls the law "fatally flawed."

At the other end of the spectrum is an array of youth organizations such as the Third Eye Movement, a group of radical Bay Area youth. Third Eye's tactics have ranged from raising consciousness and money with hip hop shows to a series of in-your-face street demonstrations that often involve storming corporate

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



headquarters. "We're targeting Prop 21's funders," says Third Eye's Jasmin Smith.

The street heat is good, but beating Prop 21 will require a big and quick get-out-the-vote effort. Along with doing voter outreach, FreedomWinter is buying ads on the radio and public buses throughout the Central Valley and Bay Area. To the pleasant surprise of the anti-21 forces, an early February poll found that 41 percent of the state's voters oppose the initiative, while only 24 percent said they are in favor. Thirty-five percent remain undecided. "A victory for our side could begin to turn the tide against law-and-order politics nationally," Braz says.

But she quickly points out, "The other side could flood the campaign with money and drown us at any moment." ■

On the Fence

Human rights or big oil for Al Gore?

By Matthew Knoester

The League of Conservation Voters recently ranked Al Gore "the most knowledgeable" presidential candidate on environmental issues. But the same man who called car exhaust a "mortal threat to the security of every nation" in his best-selling book *Earth in the Balance* is now under fire from a coalition of environmental and human rights groups for his questionable ties to Los Angeles-based Occidental Petroleum Corp.

Gore's cozy relationship with Occidental comes from his father, Al Gore Sr., who became a board member and vice president of the company after he lost his Senate seat in 1970. When his father died in 1998, the younger Gore inherited nearly half a million dollars in stock. Occidental CEO Ray Irani also gave the Democratic Party \$100,000 two days after spending a night in the Lincoln Bedroom.

Gore's ties to Occidental were called into question last year when the company pushed to drill on the traditional lands of the U'wa, an indigenous group in northeastern Colombia. Occidental's drilling just west of U'wa territory has become a center of military, paramilitary

and guerrilla infighting. The U'wa claim the oil project would bring Colombia's civil war to their region.

The environmental consequences of drilling are well known. The Colombian Institute of Natural Resources charges that, because of Occidental's drilling at Cano Limon, another Colombian site, "rivers and lakes are no longer fit for human consumption." Other direct environmental impacts include deforestation, air pollution, soil erosion and disturbance of wildlife habitat.

The U'wa made international headlines in 1996 when leaders vowed to commit mass suicide if the Colombian government allowed Occidental to drill. "We are willing to give our lives to defend Mother Earth from this project, which will annihilate our culture, destroy nature and upset the world's equilibrium," said Roberto Perez, president of the U'wa Tribal Council.

Despite the U'wa's desperation, in 1999 Occidental placed their first exploratory drill a quarter mile outside the tribe's reservation, but well within their larger ancestral lands. In response, the U'wa council bought the land. But Occidental persisted last fall and acquired a special permit to drill, signed by Colombia's Environment Minister Juan Mayr.

In November, after 200 U'wa set up an encampment on the drilling site, 5,000 Colombian soldiers were deployed to surround them. On January 24, they forcibly removed the protesters—three are now missing. A few days later, Daniel Jordan—a notary public who assisted the U'wa in claiming legal title to their land—was found dead. On February 11, 450 U'wa blocking a supply road were driven away by the Colombian national police using bulldozers and tear gas. Three children drowned when their mothers fled into the Cubojon River and 15 are missing.

Corruption Index

- Presidential candidate who brags, "Of the major candidates, [I am] the only one who does not have a D.C. zip code": George W. Bush.
- Presidential candidate who has received the most campaign contributions from the Washington metropolitan area: George W. Bush.
- Amount President Bill Clinton plans to raise in soft money for the Democratic National Committee over the next three months: \$20 million.
- Amount raised by the DNC during the preceding 12 months: \$19.4 million.
- Chance that a presidential front-runner is a millionaire: 100 percent.
- Chance that a member of the general population is a millionaire: 1 percent.
- Median amount the commercial banking industry gave a senator sitting on the Banking Committee: \$96,500.
- Number of the 20 senators on the Banking Committee who voted on February 2 to make it tougher for people who declare bankruptcy to wipe out credit card debt: 15.
- Median amount of credit card debt for a family with an income of less than \$10,000: \$1,100.
- Amount a minimum-wage earner working full time would make under the minimum-wage hike approved in the same legislation: \$12,790.

Source: Public Campaign

All of this comes at a critical time for both the Colombian government and Gore. Colombian President Andres Pastrana met with President Clinton on January 24 to ask for \$1.6 billion in U.S. aid; 80 percent of that money is earmarked for the Colombian military.

Gore alone cannot save Colombia from its turmoil. Perhaps he cannot even stop the huge amount of aid to the Colombian military. But he has been presented with an opportunity to show where he stands when push comes to shove: human rights or big oil? As vice president and a major shareholder in Occidental, Gore could stop the drilling and protect U'wa land with one phone call.

But Gore has done nothing. Last fall, Brett Hulsley, executive director of the Sierra Club, wrote to Gore about the U'wa situation. Gore has not responded. On February 3, eight demonstrators were arrested and dragged out of Gore's Manchester, New Hampshire, headquarters after demanding a meeting about the U'wa dispute. "Gore can make the difference," says Atossa Soltani of Amazon Watch. "He can save the U'wa and avert a public relations disaster for himself by intervening now." ■

The Other Side

By Russell Contreras

Her voice is like that of any concerned mother. She tells her son Ruben that his 8-year-old son got a good report card, her heart is fine and his aunt just had an operation. She says the family might move to another part of town, a cousin is getting married, and it's beginning to get cold outside. "Hope you're doing well," she says with slight shake in her voice.

This isn't just ordinary small talk. Ruben is in prison. And his mother is visiting with him via KPFT 90.1 FM, the local Pacifica station. *The Prison Show* is very popular, especially among inmates at nearby Texas State Penitentiary in Huntsville. "Hearing the voices of these loved ones is like hearing whispers at an airport," says Ray Hill, the show's longtime host.

Hill—an ex-convict himself—served four years in a California prison for a string of burglaries. The experience changed his life. As an inmate, he was confronted with life in a cramped cell, harsh labor, sexual assault and routine brutality from guards.

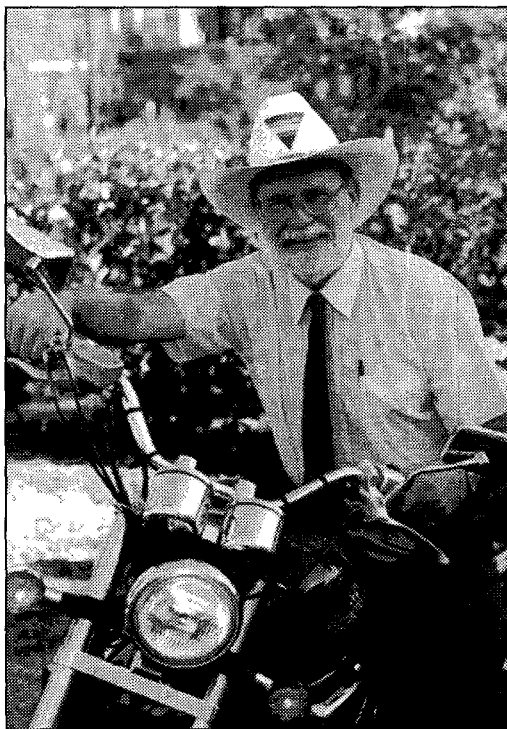
When he got out of prison in 1974, Hill abandoned his life of crime, moved to Houston and hoped to become active in gay and lesbian politics. But there was one problem—Houston had no gay rights groups. "I looked around and saw all these gay and lesbian activists, but no organization," Hill says. "So I started one."

Hill founded the Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus in the late '70s, which focused on building a strong presence in Montrose, Houston's gay neighborhood. He went on to run for City Council three times and help create a gay rights platform in the Texas Democratic Party. Often referred to as the "grandfather" of Houston gay and lesbian politics, Hill's groundbreaking efforts paved the way for other local gay politicians, most notably Houston City Council member Annise Parker.

Despite his political pursuits, Hill is continually identified with *The Prison Show*, which he started more than 20 years ago when he helped found KPFT. Now the show is more important than

ever. In a state that spends almost three times more on its prisons than its schools and leads the nation in executions, Hill believes it's important to make a dent in public consciousness. "What I do is humanize a population that the rest of the media is demonizing," he says. "I allow audiences to hear the families of these 'demons.'"

From mothers of Death Row inmates to the children of prisoners serving short sentences for theft, Hill takes all kinds



Ray Hill

of calls so that listeners know inmates' families are suffering, too. "Listening to those voices you are reminded that these are people with real feelings and real lives," he says. "We tend to act as if they don't exist."

Texas has some of the strictest visitation rules in the country, and prisoners rarely have contact with the free world. Texas inmates have no telephone access. Only prisoners with very good behavior are allowed a five-minute call every 90 days—and no one can call from the outside.

Texas also makes a nice profit housing inmates from other states with overcrowded systems. So families often have to drive cross-country for a mere four-hour visit with no physical contact. Most are too poor to make the trip. These obstacles make it even harder for inmates to keep in touch with their families—and makes Hill's show a significant part of Texas prison life.

Hill claims *The Prison Show's* unique format came by pure accident. Originally the show featured lawyers and bail bondsmen explaining the business of the prison system. That all changed when he got a call from a woman right before he went on the air, begging Hill to relay a message to her son, who was a regular listener. The woman had saved up money for three years to visit Huntsville, but got into a car accident on the way. "You could hear the traffic and thunder in the background," Hill recalls. "There was such desperation in her voice."

Hill allowed the woman to talk to her son directly over the air. She began to tell him about life at home when a telephone operator interrupted and demanded another 75 cents for three more minutes. Hill told the operator to bill the radio station. "Our show changed from a panel of experts talking about the prison system to a show about the victims of the system," he says.

From those first days, the show has grown in popularity to become one of the top-rated shows on KPFT. Hill now wants to expand *The Prison Show* and have it broadcast in other parts of the state.

But Hill has faced opposition to his show since its inception. He regularly receives angry letters and occasionally gets calls from family members of crime victims. "What we typically hear is a voice of revenge," Hill says. "They say things like 'that animal deserves to die!'"

Hill invites such callers to an on-air dialogue with inmates' loved ones. "What people don't understand is that when someone commits a crime, two sides are hurt," he says. "I don't comment on any of these arguments. I let the audience figure it out for themselves." ■

Malathion Madness

The federal government is now investigating whether malathion—the pesticide that was sprayed over millions of people in the New York area last summer to combat the outbreak of West Nile fever—may cause cancer.

The investigation was revealed in a letter sent in early February from a U.S. Department of Agriculture official to an environmental scientist near Washington. "The [Environmental Protection Agency] is considering changing the registration status of malathion because of studies that suggest it could be a low-level human carcinogen," wrote Harold Smith, a senior project leader in policy and program development at the USDA.

The letter, a copy of which I obtained, was sent to Dr. Robert Simon, a toxicologist who has been a steadfast critic of massive pesticide spraying by New York health officials. Smith was responding to Simon's questions about the latest USDA data on malathion's impact on crops and the environment.

Mary Helen Cervantes, a spokeswoman for the EPA's New York regional office, confirms that the agency is reassessing malathion's health effects, but she insists it was only one of many pesticides currently under review. "We're looking at some of the older pesticides to make sure they meet the standards of the latest science," she says. New federal laws, she notes, require the agency to look at pesticides based on the effects on children—"the most vulnerable population."

Another federal environmental official, however, concedes that in malathion's case EPA scientists are still debating "whether it might cause cancer in lab animals." Their finding will come within the next few months. Smith, the author of the original letter, refused to comment.

During the past few months, in testimony before the New York City Council, as well as New York and Connecticut state legislative committees, Simon and other environmentalists have insisted that malathion is far more dangerous than federal officials have claimed. The activists point to a recent Florida Health Department study that documented

adverse health affects to humans who were exposed to malathion during an aerial spraying of crops near Tampa.

Critics also note that during the New York City spraying thousands of dead fish were found in two lakes on Staten Island. Since then, state health officials have



confirmed that at least one of the fish kills resulted from malathion. Since malathion is so toxic to aquatic life, it is illegal to spray it over fresh water. But there was virtually no way aerial spraying could avoid hitting any of the several rivers that empty into New York Harbor or the many small lakes and ponds that dot the city.

Malathion spraying, the activists insist, was hardly necessary to stem the West Nile outbreak. Indeed, it may have created greater long-term health problems than it solved. They point to studies in scientific publications like *The Lancet* and the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* that have reported leukemia and bone-marrow disorders in children and significantly higher leukemia rates among farmers exposed to malathion. One 1996 study in the journal *Cancer Research* reported genetic damage in white blood cells exposed to the pesticide.

A few of these studies are nearly 20 years old. Why it has taken so long for the EPA to get around to reviewing its approval of malathion and other organophosphates for public use? It could be the cushy revolving door that has developed between the EPA and the pesticide industry. According to a recent study by the Environmental Working Group in Washington, four of the six assistant administrators for the EPA division of pesticides and toxic sub-

stances since it was founded in 1977 have gone to work or lobbied for the pesticide and agribusiness industry after leaving the agency.

Steven Jellinek, for instance, was the first head of the office under President Carter. He went on to become chairman of Jellinek, Schwartz & Connolly, a consulting firm that represents some of the biggest pesticide companies in the world, including Monsanto, Dow and Cheminova—the Danish firm that produces the malathion that was sprayed on New York.

Jellinek's firm boasts a slew of former EPA officials in its ranks, including Dan Barolo, who until 1997 was the Clinton administration's director of the Office of Pesticide Programs. The firm trumpets to prospective clients its vast knowledge of the EPA bureaucracy and its ability to delay and derail adverse rulings from the agency. It's no surprise that the EPA has taken its sweet time about reviewing studies that question the "safety" of pesticides.

At least the agency has always warned that there are dangers with pesticide use. "No pesticide is 100 percent safe,"

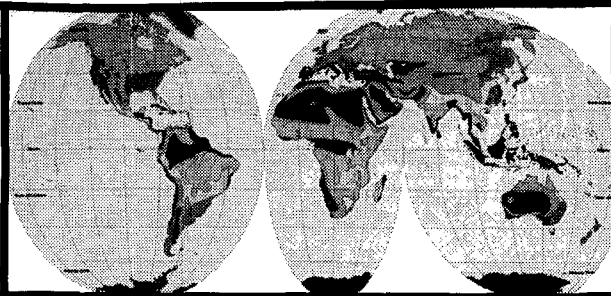
There is a cushy revolving door between the EPA and the pesticide industry.

Cervantes says. "Those who are applying it and the public have to exercise caution and care."

The same cannot be said of New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and other officials who kept insisting that spraying of malathion was perfectly safe during the West Nile virus crisis last summer. They allowed their helicopters to indiscriminately spray thousands of unsuspecting people in parks, beaches and streets of the city and refused to listen to the angry response of their own citizens.

Even now, with spring around the corner, and the chance of a new outbreak of West Nile virus in the middle of an election year, Giuliani and the others refuse to rule out another round of malathion spraying, proving once again that we should never trust our health to politicians. ■

LABOR GOES GLOBAL



By David Moberg

NEW ORLEANS

As part of the big protests at the Seattle World Trade Organization meetings in December, the labor movement helped change the debate on globalization. "What before Seattle was a somewhat obscure conversation about whether markets are more or less open," says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, "has become a genuine national conversation about new rules and standards to make the global economy work for working people."

Yet the success of the action is changing the labor movement and its strategies more than anyone expected. At its winter meeting here in mid-February, the AFL-CIO executive council adopted an ambitious new approach that will not only intensify its fight for workers rights in the global economy, but also broaden its focus on improving the lives of workers everywhere.

A couple of decades ago, the campaign for fair trade was primarily a concern of industrial unions. But it has evolved into a more comprehensive campaign for a fair society, both globally and nationally, that is embraced by the whole labor movement. The AFL-CIO envisions an ongoing campaign, carried out with allies ranging from students fighting sweatshops to environmental groups, that will raise issues of workers rights, fair and sustainable global economic development and corporate responsibility.

Significantly, the labor movement is launching this effort during an election year when most unions also will be campaigning for Al Gore, with whom they do not agree on many trade issues. In particular, unions will be carrying on a high-profile fight against extending permanent normal trading relationships to China as part of the Clinton administration's bilateral agreement on China's entry into the WTO. Union officials, who harbor hopes that Gore will be more responsive than Clinton, tend to downplay their differences with the vice president, rather than frankly acknowledging that they prefer him despite his shortcomings. There are worries in some quarters that the China/WTO effort could divert energy from politics and generate disaffection from Gore (or Bradley) and other labor-backed candidates in the fall. But according to aides, Sweeney was inspired by the Seattle protests and has taken up the fight on globalization with personal gusto.

The new program on globalization meshes neatly with labor's domestic priorities. While emphasizing the rights of workers around the world, unions also are intensifying their "voice at work" campaign in this country to highlight the ways in which workers are denied the right to organize because of corporate harassment and faulty labor laws.

Last year, unions reported organizing 600,000 new members, up from 475,000 the year before. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a net gain of 266,000 members, keeping the union share of the work force steady and reversing years of decline. Nevertheless, unions still lose roughly half of all



AFP PHOTO/JOHN G. MABANGLO

elections, largely because of employer opposition, threats and illegal firings. By contrast, unions win handily when they have used their power to win neutrality agreements from employers, who recognize the union after a majority of workers sign union cards. Along with its voice at work campaign, the AFL-CIO will launch its first statewide effort—in Ohio—to develop new strategies and organizational capacity for state and city labor federations. By strengthening these union coalitions, the AFL-CIO hopes to provide greater support for organizing and its political fight for the right to organize.

The executive council also adopted new policies on immigration that reflect an evolution in union strategy. Fifteen years ago, most unions backed imposition of sanctions against employers who hired undocumented workers. But now unions have concluded that the policy did not control illegal immigration and simply victimized immigrant workers whatever their legal status, increasing employers' power.

Besides supporting an amnesty for existing undocumented workers, labor unions want to see increased enforcement of basic labor laws covering minimum wages, workplace safety, overtime and other standards, since employers exploit illegal aliens as a way of violating those laws. They also seek protection from deportation for undocumented workers when they file workplace complaints or organize a union. (Just last month, the Immigration and Naturalization Service initiated deportation action, based on an employer complaint, against workers at a Holiday Inn Express in Minnesota who had organized a union and provided testimony to the EEOC.) Also, rather than increasing the numbers of temporary immigrants for high-tech jobs under special visas, labor argues that workers in the United States could be retrained to meet any industry needs.

Of course, the current Congress is unlikely to pass any of the measures labor unions now advocate. "But it's extremely important, given the labor movement's rocky history on immigration, that we make it clear to the immigrant community that we're on their side," says Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union President John Wilhelm.

The success in the streets of Seattle helped to consolidate the "understanding that global issues will have an impact on every part of the labor movement, that it goes beyond the trade impact on manufacturing," says AFL-CIO international affairs director Barbara Shailor. That includes not only public employees facing privatization, but "real political issues about what kind of economic development is going to take place," she says.

The new campaign on globalization will expand efforts to raise the issue of workers rights in other global forums besides the WTO, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. "The political impact of Seattle thrust us into a new position," says AFL-CIO public policy director David Smith. "It charged our ability to argue in a positive way, and it broadened the universe of trade union thinking about these issues."

In particular, the AFL-CIO has decided to devote much more attention to developing countries. In April, labor unions will sponsor a week of meetings and action coinciding with the spring meeting of the IMF and World Bank in Washington, joining in the Jubilee 2000 demonstrations for more extensive debt relief for poor nations. "The IMF ought to be about growth, not austerity, about increasing domestic demand and raising living standards," Smith says. "The standard recipe of high interest rates, reduction in public spending and export-led growth doesn't work and extracts a price almost entirely from working people."

Labor unions will also increasingly target multinational corporations, demanding that they honor previous commitments to fair global practices and adopt the code of conduct proposed by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). And, the AFL-CIO has prodded the international labor institutions—such as the ICFTU and the International Trade Secretariat, which represent workers from broad industrial sectors—to rethink their operations to become more effective in global campaigns for workers rights.

But labor's first focus will be on stopping permanent normal trading status with China. Labor intends to emphasize China's abuse of workers rights, its rejection of any discussion of labor and environmental protections at the WTO, and its unwillingness to abide by international agreements—including repeated statements in recent months by Chinese officials indicating that they do not intend to live up to the bilateral agreement with the United States. However, labor strategists hope to make labor rights and the WTO the focus of the campaign, not demonization of China.

As part of their campaign, unions will put the spotlight on major corporate lobbyists, such as GE, Boeing and Eastman Kodak, who are pushing for permanent normal trading relationship status (NTR, formerly called most-favored nation status) with China. They will not only pressure these companies to guarantee workers rights in China, but also campaign on behalf of individual Chinese workers who have been jailed

or harassed for advocating workers rights.

Although critics of China have not succeeded in blocking the annual extension of NTR status, at least a dozen members of Congress who have supported annual approval say they do not want Congress to permanently give up one of its few

levers to advance Chinese workers rights. China could still enter the WTO even without permanent NTR, although it has indicated that it would not do so; and even if the bilateral U.S.-China accord were repudiated, the United States would benefit from any tariff reductions or agreements on access to Chinese markets negotiated by Europe or other trading partners.

While denying permanent NTR may not have an immediate effect on China, it would be an important political victory for advocates of workers rights and continue the momentum from the Seattle protests. However, there are signs that supporters of the deal with China may decide not to push it this year. Michigan Rep. David Bonior—House Minority Whip and the leading Democratic opponent of permanent NTR—says that the "best way to minimize [the tension between electing Gore and the fight on China] is not to bring it up."

Furthermore, according to a Hart Research poll done in January for the AFL-CIO, 70 percent of registered voters supported arguments against permanent NTR based on China's human rights records or the threat to jobs, compared to 20 percent who support the case for ending annual review of China's status. Nearly half of all voters would be less likely to vote for a member of Congress who endorsed permanent NTR.

After labor's success in rescuing a floundering Gore campaign by providing margins of victory in the Iowa caucus and the New Hampshire primary, the AFL-CIO and most unions obviously have a stake in his success, and he owes a deep debt to them. It's unclear whether his debt to corporations antagonistic to labor rights is even greater. But the new labor campaign on fairness in the global economy will keep the issue—and the pressure—alive during this election year. ■

"The political impact of Seattle thrust us into a new position. It charged our ability to argue in a positive way, and it broadened the universe of trade union thinking."



JOHN ZICH/NEWSMAKERS

By Salim Muwakkil

**Jesse Jackson's
new crusade:**

**It's all
about**

the Benjamins

On its way to record economic expansion, the United States has amassed 2 million prison inmates, the largest prison population of any nation on earth. These disparate milestones tell such contradictory stories about America that most national leaders simply have avoided the bad news and trumpeted the good. There are few national figures capable of incorporating these seemingly paradoxical trends into a coherent agenda. The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson is one of them.

Disparate activities in varying venues are nothing unusual for Jackson, whose wide range of concerns is well-known and frequently criticized. Although it may be tempting to dismiss his issue-hopping as one big publicity stunt, veteran Jackson watchers have learned to follow his trail when looking for the issues of the future.

Last November, Jackson was arrested protesting the expulsion of six black high school students in Decatur, Illinois. He argued that the school's "zero-tolerance" punishment was too harsh and helped fuel a "jail-industrial complex" full of high school dropouts. Just two months later, Jackson hosted some of the nation's top business leaders at the swank New York Sheraton for the third annual "Wall Street Project," organized by his Rainbow/PUSH Coalition.

The Wall Street Project seeks to link the future of black America to investment capital. "African-Americans don't own a single building in downtown America," Jackson explained to an audience of investment bankers and CEOs in January during the opening session of the conference. "It's not because we don't have the desire or the ability. It's because we can't get access to capital."

In addition to his Wall Street office, Jackson also has initiated the "LaSalle Street Project" in Chicago and the "Silicon Valley Project" in California's high-tech corridor. In those environs, he pushes the notion that corporations must invest in inner-city and rural America just as they do in foreign markets. He seeks to win minorities a greater share of business contracts with America's top corporations as well as to get more minorities placed on corporate boards. "We're telling Wall Street that inclusion leads to growth," he said. "The more talent, the more ideas you have included, the more everybody wins."

Jackson's primary selling point is not that such investments are the moral thing to do, but that they will boost the bottom line even as they help lift folks off the bottom. His message to the money men is shorn of superfluous sentiment and focused on the supreme moral value of this unsentimental era: profit.

But when Jackson takes this notion on the road, it has a much softer melody. He has even supplied a lyrical playbook, entitled *It's about the Money!* Written by Jackson and his congressman son and namesake, the recently published volume reads more like a self-help manual designed to acquaint readers with elementary concepts of money management than a book co-authored by two of the country's most progressive leaders.

In a world where, as a friend quips, "the IMF and all the other MFs control the global economy," there seems to be little alternative but to learn the rules of capitalism. In the introduction to his new book, Jackson writes, "Failing to understand the role of money in a capitalist system is like being a fish that doesn't know how to navigate water."

But Jackson also has been taken to task for his new direction. Jackson critics on the left contend he is merely showing his capitalist colors; his right-wing detractors argue he is just expanding his extortion techniques from the government to corporations. Even those who consider him an ally are suspicious of his enthusiasm for capitalist solutions and corporate connections. Has he forgotten the historical lessons of neocolonialism, that capitalism needs losers to thrive? Isn't his embrace of corporate capitalism a betrayal of the progressive ideas held by his mentor, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.?

In his latest book on King, *I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King Jr.*, Michael Eric Dyson argues persuasively that King had embraced ideas of democratic socialism before his death. In his 1967 book, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos Or Community?*, for instance, King notes that "for the evils of racism, poverty and militarism to die, a new set of values must be born. Our economy must be more person-centered than property or profit-centered."

Because of his two presidential campaigns as a grassroots, left-leaning insurgent and his activist public profile, Jackson has been considered the steward of King's progressive legacy. Isn't it blasphemous to consort with the corporate moguls who have been the targets of progressives' ire since at least the late 19th century?

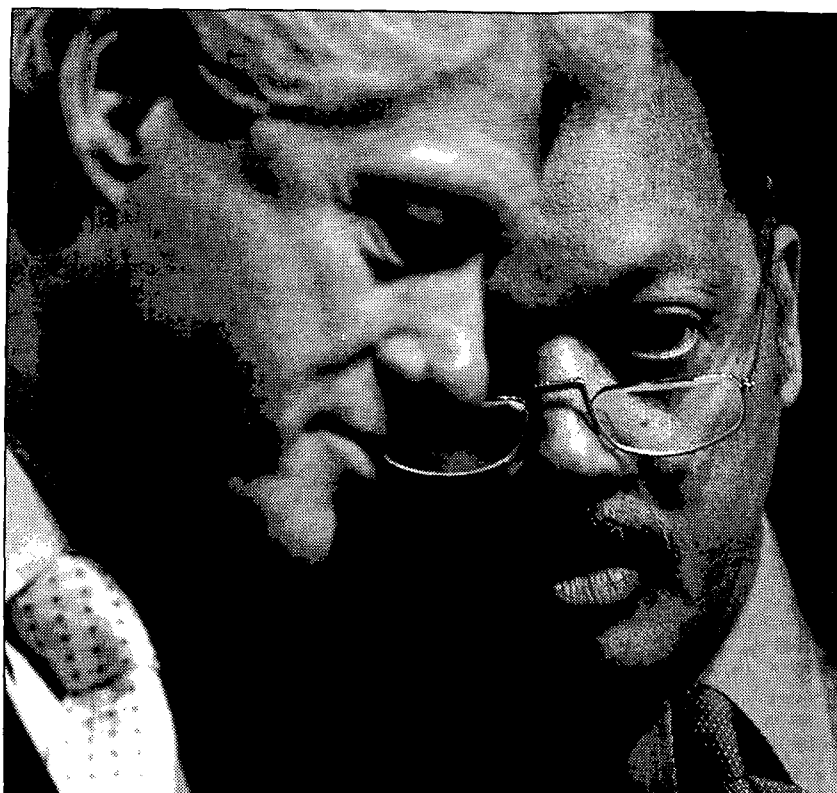
With typical grandiosity, Jackson rationalizes his latest thrust as the "fourth movement in the freedom symphony," characterizing it as a kind of grand finale of the movement King

helped lead. "The first movement was the struggle to end slavery," Jackson notes in a recent column explaining why he was celebrating King on Wall Street. "The second was the movement to end legal apartheid in the South. The third movement was gaining the right to vote. Dr. King led us this far. But he had just begun the fourth movement—the struggle for economic security and equal opportunity—when he was struck down."

Jackson writes that the fourth movement will be the hardest because it requires "unlikely alliances and a break with preconceived notions." Apparently, Jackson is referring to previous notions about the inadequacies of capitalism or King's notion about the need to shun a "profit-centered" economy.

"My problem is that Jackson's strategy is elitist in focus," says Lisa Brock, a founding member of the Black Radical Congress and associate professor of history at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. "Most black people don't have the resources to invest and still face the problems caused by the very corporations he's romancing."

"Too many working
poor people
choose a bear
lottery over a bull
market."



Jackson has the ear of CEOs and presidents.

In his new book, *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis*, Christian Parenti argues that the soaring prison population Jackson regularly bemoans is, in fact, a by-product of the aggressive corporate culture he now champions. "Stocks associated with the criminal justice system are booming, primarily because of the growth of the prison-industrial complex," Brock adds. "Does Jesse want us to add that very profitable stock to our portfolio?"

Despite these criticisms, Jackson's capitalist embrace is nothing new. His latest capitalist adventures are continuations of his previous concerns about economic equity and corporate reciprocity. He has long argued that inner-city and rural communities were ripe for the kind of investment U.S. corporations reflexively target elsewhere in the world. Even while working with King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Jackson brought an economic focus to civil rights concerns; he headed the group's Operation Breadbasket, which badgered inner-city supermarkets to employ local residents and stock products made by black-owned companies. When Operation PUSH broke away from SCLC in 1971, Jackson again asserted the primacy of economics in the freedom struggle. "To a considerable extent, Jackson's current strategy is a throwback to Operation PUSH's 'corporate covenants' of 20 years ago," Manning Marable, director of Columbia University's Institute for Research in African-American Studies, writes in a recent column.

That strategy utilized a method in which PUSH negotiators would threaten to "withdraw enthusiasm" (a euphemism for boycott) from corporations unless they signed a "covenant" to increase minority hiring and contractual

services. Several companies signed such agreements with PUSH (including Ford, Burger King and Anheuser-Busch). In 1994, *Black Enterprise* magazine published an article that charted the course of some of those covenants and found significant increases in African-American employment and the granting of franchises by participating firms. Other civil rights groups, including the NAACP, later adopted similar strategies.

Civil rights groups are increasingly focusing their agendas on issues of economic justice. Jackson again appears to be leading the way with his various "projects" encouraging market investments. One aspect of the Wall Street Project is to use churches to evangelize an economic message, transforming debt-ridden black consumers into solvent stockholders. "Too many working poor people choose a bear lottery over a bull market," Jackson explained in a recent interview. "They choose floating gambling boats over stable banks. They must be brought into the age of economic enlightenment."

Jackson has challenged churches to initiate investment clubs and financial education programs for their members. He urges them to form "finance ministries" that will instruct church staff and members on how to reduce debt, build equity and gain an ownership stake in their communities. "It's a contradiction to build a church house and not have a plan to build your own house," he said.

Those who argue that Jackson has abandoned the progressive agenda have little evidence for their claim. The graying 58-year-old is still fighting the important fights. Although wildly unpopular in the suburbs and on editorial pages, his Decatur campaign showcased the damage being inflicted by zero-tolerance policies, particularly on African-American youth. He has spoken out forcefully about several police brutality-killing cases, from Riverside, California to Brooklyn to his Chicago hometown. Name an issue, Jackson's on it. True, his commitment often is fleeting and episodic. But he's a self-professed tree shaker; let others make the jelly.

But the larger question of whether market mechanisms are capable of providing relief for those left out is seldom raised in the capitalism-friendly Rainbow/PUSH coalition. The title of Jackson's latest book is just a slight variation on the hip-hop motto "it's all about the Benjamins," slang referring to Ben Franklin's face on the \$100 bill. The nation's leading civil rights activists appears to be in concert with those inner-city bards who have long made the point that market logic may be the only ideology that counts these days. ■

Kohl's True Legacy

By Paul Hockenos

When the campaign finance scandal broke wide open around Germany's most successful postwar party, the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a black cloud of disgust seemed to descend upon Germany. The daily revelations of past slush funds, secret bank accounts and cover-ups evoked deep bitterness across the country, from the pillars of the conservative establishment to the average person on the street, including those who had seemed prepared to forgive former chancellor Helmut Kohl and his party for almost anything.

Faithful conservatives may have felt that the moralistic CDU betrayed their ideals, but ordinary Germans were most appalled at the corruption itself, a breach of the same law they are required to uphold. The German bureaucracy and legal system shows no leniency toward even the slightest legal irregularities, intentional or not. If you don't read the fine print or happen to miss a deadline by a day, you pay the price. It is notoriously fastidious, and most Germans are proud of their by-the-book culture.

Yet, despite the outrage and soul-searching, Germany has stopped short of re-evaluating the political legacy of Kohl's 16-year rule. The former chancellor is seen here as one of the 20th century's greatest statesmen and, of course, the father of German reunification. Even in his moment of disrepute, Kohl is considered by many a model leader for Germany. These are myths that remain intact.

To his credit, Kohl is justly acknowledged for pushing through the unification of the country in record speed, and on terms favorable to Germany that were unimaginable during the Cold War. Less than a year after the Berlin Wall fell, Germany was one again. But the reckless decision to drive unification forward as quickly as possible had devastating consequences for the united Germany. Hundreds of firms and entire industries in Eastern Germany, both large and small, were faced overnight with competition from Western Germany that inevitably spelled their death. Western German business immediately moved in to those markets to provide goods and services that the bankrupt Eastern firms had supplied. Factories that might have proved profitable after a limited transition period were either closed down or sold off for a fraction of their worth.

The prosperity Kohl promised the Eastern Germans never came. To the contrary: Unemployment soared, exceeding 30 percent in hard-hit regions. Unemployment in new Eastern states is still double that in Western

Germany, hovering around 18 percent. As a result, many Eastern Germans, particularly the younger generation, identify with neither the new German state nor democratic principles in general. The situation has left them disillusioned, alienated and politically homeless. Surveys show them in search of an authoritarian leader and highly susceptible to demagoguery. Unnerving numbers of these young people have sought refuge among the ranks of extreme right-wing groups.

The fact that these young people gravitate toward anti-foreigner, xenophobic movements isn't simply an irrational expression of blind rage. It is also a piece of Kohl's legacy. To a certain degree, the Christian Democrats deserve credit for both incorporating and marginalizing political groups to their right. Over the decades, most Christian Democrats came to embrace a modern brand of conservatism



FABRIZIO BENSCH/REUTERS

More subtly than the overt racists, Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats appealed to nationalist nostalgia and "Germany first" jingoism.

that accepted the tenets of Western democracy. It sought to distance itself from the prewar conservatism and old German nationalism tainted by the stigma of the Nazi past. Unlike in France, Belgium, Austria or Italy, there is no extreme right-wing party represented in Germany's parliament.

At the same time, Kohl's CDU relied upon a populist discourse that strategically targeted the far-right constituency. More subtly than the overtly racist splinter parties, it appealed to nationalist nostalgia and "Germany first" jingoism. German conservatives clearly saw the country as a *Volksgemeinschaft*, or ethnic community, a homogenous nation-state of ethnic, pure-blood Germans. At best, foreign nationals would be tolerated in Germany, so long as they took the jobs Germans didn't want and left afterward. The Christian Democrats staunchly opposed citizenship for non-Germans living in Germany—and even their children born and schooled in Germany.

The CDU and its sister party in Bavaria functioned as umbrella organizations for a hodgepodge of conservative interest groups, including some unsavory movements that refused to sever their links—or sympathies—with the Third Reich era. At no point did Christian Democrats willingly acknowledge the "brown spots" in their own party or in the mainstream of Germany's political culture. Kohl and his conservatives both maintained and perpetuated a political culture that was fertile ground for the far right. The extremists' rhetoric of intolerance and racism largely reflects what the CDU and its allies employed for years in their populist campaign against Germany's liberal political asylum laws. Like the CDU, the jobless and disoriented blame people of color for their problems. The baseball bat-wielding skinheads take it all one step further.

Now, with the CDU discredited and in disarray, the field is open for new, less socially acceptable right-wing groups to move in on its turf. It is the chance they have long been waiting for. This scenario, of course, is all the more worrying in light of the current drama in Austria, where Jörg Haider's far-right Freedom Party recently joined Austrian conservatives in a coalition government. The steady rise of the Freedom Party has been watched with considerable discomfort from Germany, where the lion's share of Germans are proud that no similar party has been able to establish itself.

But one of the reasons there is no charismatic far-right leader like Haider is simply because he doesn't exist in Germany. If he did, and particularly at this sensitive moment, there is little doubt he would attract a following. Most probably, it would not be as substantial as in Austria, which has been considerably slower than Germany in addressing the questions of its past, but it would certainly shake up the political landscape and shift political discourse dangerously to the right. In the Eastern German states, in particular, such demagoguery could catch on quickly.

In Austria, at least, the political crisis has ignited a fierce debate over political values and the country's relationship to liberal democracy. In Germany, the CDU's crimes have not yet led to a rethinking of the nature of German conservatism. Hopefully, the debacle in Austria and the stern international response will serve as an example to all Europeans of the price paid for such a path. ■

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Austria: Isolated but not Alone

By Tony Wesolowsky

The old political order has been shattered in Austria with the rise of Jörg Haider and his far-right Freedom Party. Since the end of World War II, the Social Democrats and the conservative People's Party had been the Alpine nation's sole power brokers, divvying up the spoils in a cozy "Grand Coalition" scheme. That all ended last October when 1.2 million Austrians cast ballots for the Freedom Party and its xenophobic, anti-immigrant platform. Months of anxious moments and maneuvering to exclude the Freedom Party from government came to nothing, and in early February Haider and his party got what they wanted: a share of national power.

The news was met by widespread condemnation across the globe. Israel recalled its ambassador; the United States did likewise, but only for "consultations." In an unprecedented move, Austria's 14 European Union (EU) partners enacted diplomatic sanctions, claiming there would be no "business-as-usual" with the new government. In Vienna, demonstrators took to the normally staid streets in protests marked by violent clashes with police.

Analyzing the "Haider phenomenon" has become something of a cottage industry, with attention focused on the charismatic leader, the country's bankrupt political system, and Austria's own troubled Nazi past. Less discussed but more worrisome is that Haider is just one piece—albeit the most shocking—of Europe's growing right-wing puzzle, nurtured by the growing ranks waylaid by the juggernaut of globalization.

For years the Freedom Party operated on the fringe of the Austrian political scene, its Europhobia and opposition to immigration never really resonating with the general public. That all changed in 1986 when the party elected a new leader, Haider. A skilled orator with boyish charm, Haider polished the party's message and dragged it out of obscurity. Only three years after taking the party's top post, Haider was elected governor in his native Carinthia, a southern region of Austria with a large number of Slovenes, one of the six *Volksgruppen*, or national groups, living in Austria.



Jörg Haider is just one piece of Europe's growing right-wing puzzle, nurtured by the growing ranks waylaid by the juggernaut of globalization.

But in 1991 Haider was forced to resign after praising the employment policies of Nazi Germany. Four years later, he described Nazi concentration camps as "punishment camps" and said the SS was "a part of the German army which should be honored." In a 1998 televised debate, Haider compared the deportation of Jews by the Nazis to the expulsion of Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia after the war.

Campaigning for his party before the latest election, Haider called for a freeze on immigration with slogans like "stop overpopulation by foreigners." The number of foreigners living in Austria has doubled to around 700,000 since 1989. Like other countries in Europe, Austria, a country of some 8 million, also has seen an influx of refugees from the former Yugoslavia. As the number of immigrants rises, so does the resentment toward them from Austrians. The Freedom Party also hit political pay dirt with its staunch opposition to EU expansion, an issue that resonates with those who fear a flood of job seekers should the EU accept the Czech Republic, Hungary or Poland, where wages are a fraction of those in Austria.

But strip away much of the crude racism, and the message peddled by the Freedom Party is basically in tune with other party platforms in Austria. In fact, the previous government of Social Democratic Chancellor Viktor Klima had already

brought immigration to a trickle. That partly explains Austrian resentment for being lumped together with the Serbias and Libyas of the world over the Haider affair. Austrians had much the same reaction to Western rebukes of former Austrian President (and ex-Nazi) Kurt Waldheim. Unlike Germany, Austria has not done the soul-searching to come to terms with its Nazi past. To put it bluntly, the Austrians don't get it.

At the same time, it isn't really fair just to single out Austria. All of Europe is becoming a stage for politicians like Haider, with their anti-immigrant, xenophobic message playing to an increasingly receptive audience. Thirty-three percent of respondents in a 1997 Europe-wide poll described them-

selves as "quite" or "very" racist, according to the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia. During years of recession, radical industrial restructuring and double-digit unemployment, there also has been an inevitable disenchantment with established political parties in power across Europe. Scapegoating of immigrants and asylum seekers by the far right has brought rich political dividends.

This largely explains the rise of the National Front in France, the Flemish bloc in Belgium and, to a lesser degree, the far-right National Alliance and the Northern League in Italy. Last October, the Swiss People's Party made dramatic gains in parliamentary elections, after campaigning on a broadly negative platform: anti-Europe, anti-immigrant and anti-Socialist.

What can be done about this trend? The head of the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development, Rubens Ricupero, told a recent trade conference in Bangkok that the way to stem the rise of the far right is to ensure that globalization benefits ordinary people and considers human issues as well as financial ones. "If we accept that the only logic is profit-seeking without any consideration to human values," he said, "then we will destroy the fabric of society and there will be an enormous backlash against globalization."

But that warning generally has been ignored not only by Austria's Social Democrats, but other neoliberal parties across the continent, which have abandoned their working-class core constituency and moved further to the center. As the Dutch daily *De Volkskrant* says, such parties serve "above all the well-off middle class, and result in losers seeking succor among radical parties, where political passion is still to be found, albeit the dangerous passion of rage and prejudice."

Politicians like Haider are waiting in the wings to dish it out. ■

Tony Wesołowsky is a journalist based in Prague who covers Central and Eastern Europe.

Sucking in the '70s

By Joe Knowles

After Barry Goldwater leveled a shotgun to the notion of a common good—but before Ronald Reagan pulled the trigger and Bill Clinton cooked the remains—there were the '70s. The decade was the last hurrah for public space as we know it, before the consensus of focus-

**How We Got Here:
The '70s: The Decade that
Brought You Modern Life
(For Better or Worse)**

By David Frum

Basic Books

418 pages, \$25

grouped, bite-sized government rendered obsolete ambitious public works, or, in the more menacing and politically acceptable phrase, "big government." Despite the ongoing cachet of '70s nostalgia, nothing so definitively demonstrates the old republic's death more than that monolith of '70s civic architecture and philosophy: the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City, built in 1977 and blown to smithereens in 1995. For all the official hand-wringing—and open contempt for civil liberties—engendered in the bloody aftermath, who is Timothy McVeigh but the brutally logical extension of Goldwater's false conscience, Reagan's cowboy bravado and Clinton's abject cowardice?

The '70s are the missing link in the nation's trajectory from halcyon hope in civil rights and the Great Society to deep suspicion of one's neighbors and manifestly desperate faith in e-commerce and 401(k) retirement plans. Up until now, not many serious historians have ventured a sustained examination of the '70s, perhaps for fear of what they might find decaying beneath the shag carpet. The left prefers the vigorous idealism of the '60s, the right the go-go '80s; both would rather not dwell on inflation and the Bee Gees. The title of the Rolling Stones' 1981 greatest-hits compilation says it all: *Sucking in the Seventies*.

Enter David Frum, amiable right-wing columnist for Canada's *National Post* and

hip-to-be-square contributor to *The Weekly Standard*. Frum's strong suit heretofore has been as a theorist of electoral politics. Though a true believer in the rightist program, his past warnings against the "marketing oxymoron" of George W. Bush's "compassionate conservatism" are telling, as is his unforgettable summation of the Clinton presidency: "The left gets words, the right gets deeds." So as Frum turns his hand toward pop history, there's reason to believe he can shed some light on an important time that is too often ignored or glibly reprocessed as just another dab on the palette of retro fashion. Indeed, the thesis stated in the subtitle of his new book, *How We Got Here: The '70s: The Decade that Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)*, is unimpeachable, insofar as it states the obvious.

For starters, the first shots of the sexual revolution may have been fired in the '60s, but in the '70s the revolt spread from the campuses to the suburbs. As Frum notes, the number one song in 1969 was The Archies' "Sugar, Sugar"; in the '70s, disco anthems to

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gay liberation percolated through shopping malls, and nobody seemed to be bothered by Woody Allen's *Orgasmatron* or John Updike's best-selling tales of wife swapping in New England. In the '70s, Nixon ended the draft, and Carter went him one better, granting outright amnesty to those who previously had ditched Uncle Sam's war machine. Nixon gave the environmental movement a federal imprimatur by creating the EPA; Carter gave solar

and other alternative fuels a priority they haven't enjoyed before or since. The '60s were a space-age decade of plastic and Formica; the '70s a relatively crunchy interlude of spider plants and macramé. Those years may not have been as historically pointed, *but they were unprecedented*. "The agonies and protests of the 1960s ended, and the questions of those days lost their focus and intensity," Frum writes. "But they did not cease to prick. Like a drop of ink in a bucket of water, the questions blurred, lost their shape, became indistinct, and finally vanished—but in vanishing, tintured the whole bucket."

That's a nice way of putting it, which is good, because beyond this sensible point of departure, Frum's compulsively readable style is one of the few things he has going for him. His understanding of the '70s is couched in a half-true, fuzzy view of the past 100 years, where the chaos of two world wars and the Great Depression transformed the supposedly laissez-faire-loving Americans of the Gilded Age into the "garrison society" of midcentury, with strong unions and relatively small gaps between rich and poor. Circumstances "convinced normally individualistic Americans to submit to unprecedented direction and regimentation."

Substitute "elites" for "Americans" in this sentence and Frum would have it right: For most Americans, the sweatshops and factory floors of the 19th century were the real time of "unprecedented direction and regimentation," when the vast majority worked incessantly at near-slave wages. By the '50s, however, a high school graduate could work only 40 hours a week and support a family of four. Elites, of course, finally agreed to wear this harness of progressive redistribution only after Depression-era threats of popular uprising were palpable in the streets.

But Frum interprets the '70s as the popular revolt against this "garrison society," when we took heroic steps toward the happy dawn of Reaganomics. Again, Frum has a habit of confusing his friends on the op-ed page of the *Wall Street Journal* with the general public. If what he means by the garrison society is liberalism, then yes, obviously it started dying in the '70s. (Certainly our actual



radical squatters took over portions of the burned-out urban core. In Washington, both parties visibly convulsed with debate, as elites wondered aloud where to go from here. But, despite occasional flashes of progressivism, they eventually made up their minds: Old guard Republicans put up a weak fight against the proto-Reaganite laissez-faire insurgency, while leading Democrats began waving the flag for deregulation. The owners of the country seized the initiative in the vacuum—and we didn't. This is the enduring tragedy of the '70s.

But not, of course, if you're David Frum. *How We Got Here* is a remarkable exercise in disinformation. The book is so fraught with basic errors and inexplicable arguments that it's hard to know where to begin. In one sermon against the evils of price controls, he argues that, contrary

to what you've heard from those raving liberal geologists, oil is actually a renewable resource: "The world's oil supply is not like the world's supply of an old master's paintings. ... The world's supply of oil is more like a supermarket's supply of canned tomatoes ... the more tomatoes that customers buy, the bigger an inventory the store will carry." Still more troubling are his flat-out lies, like how Nixon and Kissinger "prevented" a "Communist coup" in Chile, how Supreme Court Justice William Brennan was like Chairman Mao, or, in Frum's weirdest moment, how feminism led to ... shoplifting? Say what?

Meanwhile, on Vietnam Frum is coolly able to admit that "the Indochina commitment exceeded America's real security needs." But then he goes on to denigrate the *New York Times'* decision to publish the Pentagon Papers—which so nakedly revealed the war as an imperial adventure run amok—as "a grand defeat for the ideal of national security." Similarly, Frum makes some unexpected overtures to the prospect of gay rights. Indeed, old-fashioned bellicose hatred just won't do these days, at least if you want to be taken seriously. So Frum instead tries to make a martyr out of

garrison society is still alive and well, as anyone aware of the Pentagon's budget, or the flourishing prison industry, can tell the selectively informed Frum.) But it wasn't as if the clockpunchers down at the local plant demanded their real wages fail to keep pace with inflation. They didn't insist that their unions be busted, and, later on, they didn't plead to have their jobs downsized or exported to some dictatorship free of pesky labor and environmental standards. All these assaults on the working and middle classes were a direct result of the darkside of '70s politics, where the trend back toward laissez-faire took its first bold steps in both parties.

What gave elites the green light to abandon the old social contract? Here is where Frum's ass-backwards historical lens occasionally can be instructive. The reasons Frum gives are, essentially, Vietnam, civil rights and inflation. Postwar liberal capitalism could not survive public scrutiny of its imperial underbelly, which was finally laid bare in the bloody jungles of Vietnam. Similarly, the aftermath of the civil rights movement did for the domestic consensus what Vietnam did for foreign policy. "If America could have been so terribly blind to justice in this one way,"

Frum asks, "might there not be other ways in which it was equally blind?" And runaway inflation, which signaled the beginning of the lower classes' decades-long plunge, corroded popular faith in the economic wisdom of the old political establishment. Liberal capitalism crumbled in the face of this discrediting triad: The public no longer believed the elites' story, and therefore, the elites reasoned, why should we? (Curiously, this analysis uncannily resembles that of Marxist social theorist Immanuel Wallerstein, but that's another story.)

In the ensuing vacuum, currents flowed in all directions. Culturally, it was an exciting interval between the mass entertainment of the '50s and '60s and the computerized niche marketing of the '80s and '90s. From *A Clockwork Orange* to *The Godfather* to *Annie Hall*, the movies were never more adventurous. You could peruse the bookstand at the airport or supermarket and find, situated between diet bestsellers and pulp romances, a mass-paperback copy of an anarchist epic like Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. Politically, it was heterogeneous to say the least: Suburban homeowners associations teemed with mad-as-hell John Birchers and anti-tax extremists, while bands of

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washed-up singer Anita Bryant, the anti-gay crusader who was as distasteful a bigot as there ever was: "While it could be dangerous for a public figure to speak in favor of homosexual rights, it was positively lethal to oppose them." It doesn't occur to him that just maybe she *deserved* to fall into obscurity, both for her artistic demerits and dubiously retrograde politics. In the free marketplace of ideas—the one free market Frum is afraid of—Bryant lost.

I could go on and on, but this smattering of Frum's inconsistencies points to a graver issue. Most history books reveal more about the times in which they are written than about their ostensible subject, and *How We Got Here* easily falls into this category. As a history of the '70s, it's pretty worthless, but it does speak volumes about the mood and politics of today. Frum's pattern here mimics the rhetorical style of the right's supposed antichrist, Bill Clinton: Pre-emptively massage would-be critics with some nice words, then go ahead and cheerfully disregard the facts. Perhaps Frum understands Clintonism so well because he's an ace practitioner of Clintonesque feel-good conservatism himself: *How We Got Here* is, finally, a depressing triangulation of history, a distortion of a critical period in America when we could have chosen a much different path in the aftermath of liberal capitalism.

Instead, we got handed the poisonous brand of conservative capitalism of the past two decades, for which Frum's book is a smiling and gleeful apology. Triumphant about the loss of our manufacturing base to dictatorships abroad, Frum is happy to report that "social democracy was born on the assembly line and died with it." Not necessarily: From last year's awesome showdown in Seattle to this year's ridiculous presidential race, events do point to another fissure in the suffocating consensus, a golden opportunity for a progressive revival that perhaps hasn't been seen in 30 years. Will we dare to propose an alternative vision—and act on it—or will we, once again, let the elites work it out among themselves? ■

Passion and Warfare

By Joshua Rothkopf

What's a nice, straightforward gangster narrative doing in a place like the new Jim Jarmusch picture? With *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, the writer-director dares to be reverent for the first time—a real leap of faith for someone so good at creating comic disengagement—and pulls it off beautifully.

It's fresh, but not in the satirical way you might expect from a melange

**Ghost Dog:
The Way of the Samurai**
Directed by Jim Jarmusch

of genre nods ranging from the solitary, code-bound warrior to the cigar-chomping goodfellas out to whack him. This could have been yet another exercise in Tarantino-esque pulp pride, but Jarmusch is smarter than that. Like many of the off-beat sensibilities of late, filtering genre with a surprising sense of respect—Steven Soderbergh with the revenge tale (*The Limey*); David Lynch with the pastoral road movie (*The Straight*

Story)—Jarmusch has the confidence to trust his material and give way to a simple, satisfying purity. In his case, he has come up with a kind of cinematic haiku that's so solemn it borders on hilarity; I'm sure that's just what he wanted.

The film is not afraid of grandness or the heft of legend; it's carried by an intensely concentrated performance by Forest Whitaker as Ghost Dog, a contract killer who takes his daily inspiration from the words of the *Hagakure*, a Japanese book of samurai discipline. He lives alone in a rooftop pigeon shack and bows deeply to the city skyline before setting out with his briefcase of weapons and stealth devices. (I especially liked his mysterious black box that gets him inside locked cars and purring down the parkway without any keys.) Gangbangers recognize him on the street and pay their dues; kids in the park rhyme about him as he passes by. Hooded and dangerous, Ghost Dog is a hip hop fantasy come to brooding life.



Jim Jarmusch and Forest Whitaker follow a minimalist groove.

ABBOTT GENSER/PLYWOOD PRODUCTIONS

Murderous anti-heroes may be nothing new, but Jarmusch's infusion of samurai fatalism into ghetto life is provocative; it's one more mode of survival. Even more subversive is the invitation to identify with a black killer of villainous whites: *Ghost Dog* occasionally registers like a feature-length gangsta-rap video. (The film's sinuous score of vaguely Eastern-sounding breakbeats and gongs is by the Wu Tang Clan's RZA.)

In the past, Jarmusch has kept these kinds of pop-cultural references at arm's length, deflecting an obsession with Elvis through the eyes of Japanese tourists in *Mystery Train*, or having his accidental outlaw from *Dead Man* confused for the poet William Blake (his namesake) by a naively impressed Native American called Nobody. But here, Jarmusch resonates in a way that seems unguarded and direct; his personal investment feels close to spiritual. When Whitaker reads from his book of samurai philosophy, we hear his meditative voice and see the pages of text onscreen, as if testimony from Jarmusch himself. One such passage: "Matters of great concern should be treated lightly ... matters of small concern should be considered greatly." Is there a better description for a body of work made of minutely observed moments surrounded by emptiness? A dog-eared copy of *Rashomon* changes hands totemistically, and it doesn't take long to see an independent operator like *Ghost Dog* for the romantically doomed surrogate he is: "You have to stick with the ancient ways, the old-school ways."

In deference to those old-school ways, Jarmusch offers up his most overt tribute to Kurosawa and, more crucially, to *Le Samourai*, Jean-Pierre Melville's explosive French noir with Alain Delon as another remote killer. But even in light of its fidelity to these bits of iconography, *Ghost Dog* is remarkably whole and redolent of Jarmusch's long-standing preoccupations.

A friend from New Orleans recently told me he finds Jarmusch's *Down By Law* to be the most authentic evocation of that city's urban desolation and his memories of night driving. Jarmusch's feel for barrenness is

undeniably strong; his longtime cinematographer is Robby Müller, the expert responsible for Wim Wenders' most exquisitely bleak work of the '70s. Still, bleak isn't always best: The taxicab shadowland of *Night on Earth* was so rich with composed loneliness it threatened to overpower the human drama. *Dead Man* signaled a welcome shift to an evolving wilderness of light and dark more expressive of character; *Ghost Dog* furthers this development with inky blues and dark reds reserved for moments of solitude, compounded by a smoother editing style of multiple dissolves.

Jarmusch still makes many of the same unhurried gestures to rhythm and pace as he did 15 years ago with *Stranger Than Paradise*; he's peerless when it comes to sustaining a loopy, deadpan conversation, extending it past the point where pauses speak more articulately than the words. *Ghost Dog* has several of these scenes, but Jarmusch saves the funniest for his confused Mafiosi, who turn on *Ghost Dog*'s faithful retainer, Louie, in a disbelieving interrogation early on. They want to "neutralize" their Zen-like hitman for what they see as a botched job, but Louie's no help: He's in the dark as well, and only knows the sketchiest details about his "mystery man" from what he reads in rare communications sent through carrier pigeon. It's a familiar set-up, the crime boss and his henchmen grilling a foot soldier under the hot light, but as the tough talk meanders lazily around pigeons ("Extinct!") and Public Enemy lyrics, a winning sort of surreality rises amid the scowls.

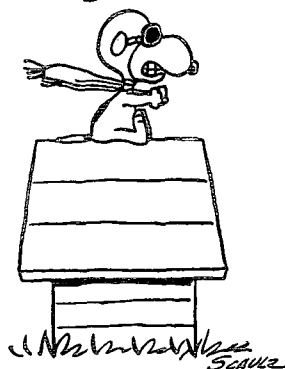
Elsewhere, *Ghost Dog* has equally detached discussions with his best friend,

an African ice cream vendor who speaks excitedly but only in French; they seem to understand each other anyway, a sweet reminder of Jarmusch's indulgences of Italian comedian Roberto Benigni in *Down By Law* and *Night on Earth*.

Ghost Dog casts a lulling spell, and glides along with a precision of command that cuts right to the essence of Jarmusch's story and leavens its mythic origins. By the time the movie plays out to its austere conclusion, you feel like you can see and hear better, so attuned you have become to his minimalist groove in the absence of broader strokes. Pauline Kael once criticized *Stranger Than Paradise* for this very mutedness, calling it "a comedy of sensory deprivation." But I wonder if Jarmusch's quiet aesthetic seems more valuable to her now, strangely resilient as movies have only gotten louder and longer. ■

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You Were a Good Man, Charles Schulz: The *Peanuts* cartoonist, who died February 12 at the age of 77, drew this in support of the San Francisco newspaper strike of 1968. It was used on a flier circulated citywide to help win broad public support for the workers. (Thanks to reader Dick Meister.)

The Mob Next Door

By Bill Boisvert

The *Sopranos* is television's most-hyped show, and it's easy to see why. Nothing could capture Susan Faludi's America better than this soap opera about mobsters in the suburbs, pitting ornamental masculinity at

The Sopranos
Created by David Chase
HBO

its most grotesque against a feminized culture of Prozac and yoga classes. With its blend of social satire, insouciant gore and Freudian provocation, *The Sopranos* is the last word in art television for a generation of hip couch potatoes, giving us exploitation with just enough irony to let us distance ourselves from our own voyeurism.

But for all its brain-splattering violence and bare-breasted bada-bing, *The Sopranos* is really just a TV-MA version of *Ozzie and Harriet*. Take the show's hero, mob boss Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini). He's the very epitome of solid suburban homeownership. In the show's opening montage, his upwardly mobile trajectory recapitulates the nation's postwar migration to the periphery, as he drives his SUV from burnt-out downtown Newark through a succession of less and less dilapidated inner-ring suburbs to the winding streets of his own opulent bedroom community. Tony is an attentive husband and devoted soccer-dad; the very first episode introduces him standing in his bathrobe in the backyard, gazing paternally at a family of ducks that have taken up residence in his swimming pool.

Tony's two roles—placid father figure and lurid underworld kingpin—mesh seamlessly; after a hearty sit-down dinner with the wife and kids, it's off for a round of brothel-hopping with the boys. He even takes a few hours out from a college tour with his daughter to strangle a squealer who ratted to the Feds. Lest the cognitive dissonance between Tony the mensch and Tony the executioner start to undermine our sympathy, the show is careful to serve up his vio-

lence along with dollops of exculpatory circumstance. Tony is so busy drinking and whoring and whacking his associates that we hardly have time to notice he's a saint, who only resorts to violence when it's thrust upon him. His wrath is generally reserved for other gangsters who are already plotting his own demise; the few civilians he victimizes—like the soccer coach who turns out to be a child molester—are invariably monstrous transgressors against the domestic order he so vigilantly upholds.

Then there's his wife Carmela (Edie Falco), a stay-at-home mom who is a perfect helpmate to Tony. Like all prime-time housewives, Carmela complains of neglect; she wishes Tony would spend more time with her and less with his strippers and prostitutes and mistresses (although, she confides to her priest, she was grateful to Tony's girlfriends for taking up the slack when she had her hands full with toddlers). But whether Tony and Carmela are hiding evidence or dealing with a dinner-table squabble over car privileges, they enjoy an effortless marital rapport. They say more to each other with a simple "fuck you" than most couples do in a lifetime.

To be sure, Tony's life is complicated. In contrast to the harmonious Soprano nuclear family, the Soprano extended family is a nest of vipers. Tony's Uncle Junior (Dominic Chianese), his nominal superior in the mob chain of command, is a figure of Queeg-like paranoia, wildly insecure and jealous of his nephew's success. He is terrified that people will find out he engages in oral sex with his girlfriend, which he considers the worst conceivable compromise of his manhood. Tony's sister Janice (Aida Turturro) is an aging hippie who collects fraudulent disability checks and alternates between calling her brother "Daddy" when she wants to wheedle something out of him and "fascist" when he refuses. And then there's Tony's mother Livia (Nancy Marchand), a manipulative old gorgon driven to rage by Tony's efforts to move her out of her house in Newark and into a nursing home. Her character is so clinically

pathological that the show's writers can do her justice only by having a psychiatrist read aloud from a textbook entry on borderline personality disorder. Tony's dysfunctional relatives actually put a contract on him, which is enough to send him to a psychiatrist with anxiety-induced blackouts.

Of course, familial strife is nothing new in mob melodrama, which revolves around the primordial conflict between "family," with its values of intimacy and loyalty, and "business," with its demand for cold calculation and emotional detachment. What's new is the glib psychologizing of family conflict: Tony's family is trying to kill him because they're crazy—the DSM says so.

That's a big change from an older tradition, which you might call the Mafia critique of capitalism. An earlier generation of Mafia movies would have linked Tony's strained family relations to the mob's underlying relations of production, in which the profit motive's ineluctable workings steadily corrode and subvert all human ties. In traditional mob lore, the Mafia fights a doomed battle against the dehumanizing effects of the market by creating an alternative economy, structured around personal honor and clan solidarity, where success depends on showing respect, granting favors and cultivating a reputation. Within the mob's nurturing matrix of tribal obligations, a penniless immigrant destined for the assembly line can find instead a cornucopia of small business opportunities.

But inevitably, gangsters turn on each other and the syndicate self-destructs. The mob's utopian vision—capitalism without alienation—collapses under the weight of its contradictions, done in by the very dynamic of greed and competition it tries to harness. In the *Godfather* saga, an archetypal Mafia tragedy in which the journey from tenement to exurb is a fall from grace, Vito Corleone's crime family begins as a way to defend his community against the bigshots of the world, but ends as a soulless multinational that is "bigger than U.S. Steel." His son Michael, having destroyed his real family for the sake of the business, is left alone on his estate, haunted by memories of life in the old neighborhood.

In *The Sopranos*, the Old Mafia's misgivings about modernity have been allayed by the New Mafia's embrace of management theory, illustrated in the ongoing contrast between Tony's crew and Uncle Junior's. Junior, a holdover from the mob's benighted past, is an organization man, obsessed with the pecking order and zealous of his prerogatives as capo. He has no idea how to motivate his subordinates except by pulling rank and having them clipped for the slighted infraction. Tony's crew, by contrast, is all about trust. Tony lets his underlings take the initiative and learn from their mistakes. His motivational tool of choice is a big bear hug. In *The Sopranos*, there's nothing wrong with the Mafia that a leadership seminar couldn't cure.

The Soprano family's idyllic suburban cocoon is another departure from mob orthodoxy, which tends to view suburban life as a kind of social death. In *GoodFellas*, for example, the suburbs are a special circle of hell reserved for those in the Witness Protection Program. To move to the suburbs is to be literally stripped of one's identity—an organic identity rooted in the Mafia's lifelong appraisal of one's character, complete with a quirky nickname—and to have one manufactured by the FBI out of a driver's license, Social Security card, Visa account and other purely numerical signifiers of personhood. The disillusioned hero is cast adrift in a suburban landscape of untouchable big-box retailers, his communal identity utterly negated by the remorseless logic of capitalism in exchange for an atomized citizenship in the republic of mass consumption. In the suburbs the mobster hero becomes a "nobody," condemned to a life of anomie and boredom, the sensuous whirl of nightclubs and cocaine orgies replaced by an understimulating expanse of lawn.

But the mob's anti-suburban consensus has broken down of late. A sea change occurred with the 1990 release of *My Blue Heaven*, a Steve Martin vehicle about a winsome mob associate named Vinnie who is resettled by the FBI to a leafy subdivision. Where the Witness Protection Program was once the



Tony and Carmela Soprano say more to each other with a simple "fuck you" than most couples do in a lifetime.

parishioners even as he primly condemns their husbands. Carmela nails him when he starts moralizing about Tony: "You eat his steaks. You watch his TV" (and, she might add, he flirts with his wife). Yet unlike Tony, he doesn't have the guts to go out and steal what he so palpably desires.

Most denatured of all is Dr. Melfi (Lorraine Bracco), Tony's therapist. Tony is something of a psychoanalytic prodigy. In the

course of 13 episodes last year he had no fewer than three furniture-throwing breakthroughs. Even his neuroses are authentic: Other people have issues with their mothers; Tony's puts a contract on him. Dr. Melfi is supposed to help Tony come to terms with his unconscious, but as he gradually reveals his underworld life to her (always in coded form, lest she turn state's evidence) she's the one who's really on the couch. After all, what is the life of a mob boss but the acting out of all the unconscious urges that people like Dr. Melfi repress?

The Sopranos offers a similar kind of therapy to its audience. The Mafia allows us to vicariously work through our unconscious impulses toward instant gratification, and eases any lingering anxieties we might have about them. In the world of *The Sopranos*, big cars, lush houses and wide-screen entertainment centers are self-evidently desirable and worth stealing, and form the necessary infrastructure for family togetherness. If we worry about the rootlessness of our lives, we can look to the mob for reassurance. They are, after all, the most earthly rooted people imaginable, yet they are also super-consumers, savoring every morsel of the merchandised universe as if it were a sweet, sweet canoli, convincing us, through their zestful acquisitiveness and connoisseurship of all things material, that consumerism is really the only authentic mode of being in the world. And if we feel uneasy that some people get robbed and killed in the process, Tony's there to remind us that, when all is said and done, they had it coming. ■

The message is clear: The mob and the suburbs are the best thing that ever happened to each other. In the suburbs, the Mafia gets legitimacy; its core business values finally come into their own as the acknowledged bedrock of community. What do the burbs get in return? They get authenticity, as the mob brings a vital infusion of piquant folkways to otherwise colorless rows of tract housing. And in *The Sopranos*, with all of HBO's resources of Nudity, Violence, Language and Adult Situations to draw on, mob authenticity gets taken to a new level—especially when compared with the deracinated, non-mob Italians hovering on the periphery.

There's Cusamano the heart surgeon, Tony's next door neighbor, who's titillated by Tony's lifestyle but doesn't want him in the country club. And there's Father Phil, the studly young parish priest who likes to dally with his female

course of 13 episodes last year he had no fewer than three furniture-throwing breakthroughs. Even his neuroses are authentic: Other people have issues with their mothers; Tony's puts a contract on him. Dr. Melfi is supposed to help Tony come to terms with his unconscious, but as he gradually reveals his underworld life to her (always in coded form, lest she turn state's evidence) she's the one who's really on the couch. After all, what is the life of a mob boss but the acting out of all the unconscious urges that people like Dr. Melfi repress?

Freedom's Sweet

By G. Pascal Zachary

It is a cliché that this country ruins many of its finest artists by showering them with wealth. For all the talk of starving artists, the greater menace seems to be the over-feeding of daring and original creators. Sated appetites leave their senses dulled.

Jazz is often an oasis from popular trends, so it perhaps isn't surprising that the country's greatest living jazz musician, Sonny Rollins, has avoided the fate of most



American success stories. A tenor saxophonist of extraordinary imagination, fire and technical accomplishment, Rollins stubbornly remains outside of the mainstream. He not only turns his back on the hottest trends in jazz, he maintains a limited performance schedule that minimizes his earnings. He also records for the independent Fantasy label, a haven for jazz purists that lacks the big-promotional budget of the conglomerate media. Fantasy lets Rollins call his own shots in the studio, which given his predilections, means that he avoids cutting hit records but stays faithful to his big, inimitable sound.

In concert, Rollins is a delight. He usually tours in major venues around the United States and Europe in the fall of each year, so while sightings are rare, it is possible to hear Rollins live. Nearing 70, he still packs a wallop on stage, an improviser without peer who unfailingly satisfies his audiences. He provokes joyous foot-stomping one moment and pious awe the next. As Joshua Redman, a young star on tenor, recently told *Down Beat* magazine, "Nothing feels premeditated or contrived about [Rollins'] playing. It's purely inspired and spontaneous, yet at the same time incredibly structured and logical."

Critics love Rollins. Four years ago, Gary Giddins, the country's most influential jazz writer, devoted an entire section of *The Village Voice* to Rollins,

calling him "the last jazz immortal." So smitten was Giddins that he even convinced Fantasy to issue 19 of his favorite Rollins cuts for a double-CD release. The music was superb, but hardly the peak of the Rollins oeuvre.

To understand what made Rollins a legend, turn the clock back to late 1957, when in the space of a few months he over-

whelmed the jazz world with a series of small group recordings that form a key part of the jazz canon. Rollins' soloing was astonishing on such tunes as "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" and his own exploration, "The Freedom Suite." But what made these performances so arresting was not only Rollins' improvisations, but his choice to perform only with a bass and drums, eschewing the piano, which at the time was viewed as the foundation of any jazz band. Rollins, however, realized that the piano only got in the way and that, through his skillful playing, he could evoke the piano's sound on his own. Exuberant, ambitious and moody: These were the traits Rollins brought to every performance.

The first of these seminal recordings came at the Village Vanguard in Manhattan on November 3. Originally released as a single album, *A Night at the Village Vanguard* proved so memorable that Blue Note, which recorded the performance, later released two more albums from that night's show. The whole evening's fare was released for the first time in a single package last year by Blue Note, a long overdue treatment for what is undoubtedly one of the finest live jazz recordings of all time.

Three months after the Vanguard date, in February 1958, Rollins recorded another album, *Freedom Suite*, which was kicked off by a riveting 20-minute

solo that spanned the entire jazz idiom and followed by a remarkably fresh rendition of the old ballad, "Till There Was You." The same year, Rollins cut another breathtaking trio session, *Way Out West*, anchored by an amazing version of the folk song, "I'm an Old Cowhand." Both of these albums, along with several others from the late '50s, are newly reissued as part of a 5-disc package, *The Freelance Years*, which contain Rollins' complete recordings for the Riverside and Contemporary labels.

Rollins would go on to record some fine albums in the '60s, notably *The Bridge* and *East Broadway Rundown*, but by the '70s he became a prisoner of his past, endlessly subject to comparisons with his younger self. To his credit, Rollins preferred to endure invidious comparisons with history rather than take the one exit open to him: sell out, go commercial, say goodbye to his signature sound. When jazz went electric in the '70s and retro in the '80s, Rollins stayed his course, playing in a style no one has yet been able to copy. But by adding a trombone and an electric bass to his regular lineup of musicians, Rollins has blended old and new elements.

The jazz greats of the postwar years—Monk, Ellington, Mingus and even Miles Davis—have all had their music picked over by players more concerned with being faithful to past masters than finding their own radical groove. Rollins is like a lonely mountain that seems too remote to climb. He may never attract diligent acolytes, and some will count this against him. But why? His finest recordings are readily available, and listening to his timeless music stands as a reminder that excellence need not fall prey to the temptations of the market. ■

Selected Discography:

Saxophone Colossus
(Original Jazz, 1956)
A Night at the Village Vanguard
(Blue Note, 1957)
Silver City: A Celebration of 25 Years on Milestone (Milestone, 1996)
The Freelance Years: Complete Riverside and Contemporary Recordings
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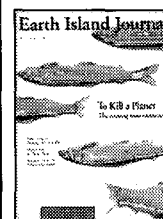
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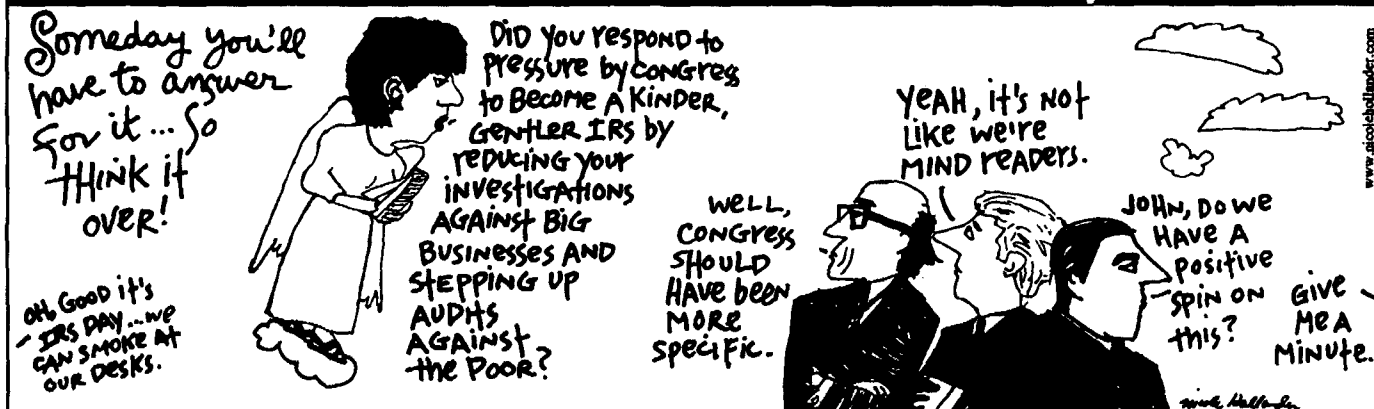
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SYLVIA

By Nicole Hollander



Continued from page 30

example, that he loved them. He talked with them. And walked, and walked, and walked with them.

"Dad—I wanna ride!" I whined.

"It ain't good for you to ride so much, boy. Walkin' is good for ya. It's good exercise for ya!"

Decades later, I would hear that echo in one of my sons, and my reply would echo my father's.

His eyes were the eyes of age, so discolored by time they seemed blueish, but there was a perpetual twinkle of joy in them, of love and living.

He lived just over a decade into this son's life, and his untimely death from illness left holes in the souls of his sons.

Without a tether, I sought and found father figures, like Black Panther Capt. Reggie Schell, and Black Panther Party Defense Minister Huey P. Newton—and indeed, the Black Panther Party itself, which, in this period of utter void, taught me, fed me and made me part of a vast and militant family of revolutionaries. Many good men and women became my teachers, my mentors and my examples of a revolutionary ideal—Zayd Malik Shakur, murdered by police when Assata was wounded and taken; Geronimo ii jaga (a.k.a. Pratt) who commanded the L.A. Chapter of the party with distinction, and defended it from deadly state attacks, himself a political prisoner who, because of the state's frame-up and judicial repression, was separated from his family and children for a quarter of a century.

Here, in this restrictive place of fathers without their children and men who were fatherless, one senses and sees the social costs of that loss.

Those unloved find it virtually impossible to love, and

those who were fatherless find themselves alienated and at war with their own communities and families.

My own sons were babies when I was cast into this hell. Neither letters, cards nor phone calls could heal the wounds that they and their sisters suffered during the long, lonely years of separation.

Here, in this man-made hell, I find young men, bubbling with bitter hatreds and roiling resentments against absent fathers, several who have taken to the odd habit of calling this writer "Papa," certainly high irony when one notes this writer is himself an absent father (and now absent grandfather).

Perhaps conscious of this irony, I resisted the nickname, until I could no longer. I realized that I live amidst a generation of young men drunk not only with alienation, but also with father hunger. I had the Black Panther Party; who did they have? Here, they have Delbert Africa, Geronimo ii jaga, Chuck Africa,

Mike, Ed and Phil Africa, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, Sundiata Acoli and other oldheads, like myself.

I realized that I resented being "Papa" to young men I didn't know, while being denied the opportunity to be a present father to the children of my flesh and my heart, by the state's banishment.

I was also in denial.

For who was the "oldhead" they were calling? Certainly not I?

It took a trip, a trek to the shiny steel burnished mirror on the wall, where I found my father's face staring back at me, to recognize the real. I am he—and "they" are me. ■

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a prisoner on Pennsylvania's Death Row. Excerpted from *All Things Censored to be published in May by Seven Stories Press.*

I live amidst a generation of young men drunk not only with alienation, but also with father hunger.

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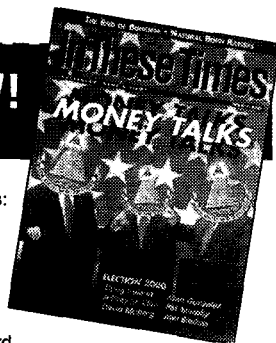
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Father Figures

It has been three decades since I have looked into his face, but I find him now, sometimes hidden, in the glimpse of a mirror.

He was short of stature, shorter than I at 10 years old, fully, smoothly bald, with a face the color of walnuts. He walked with a slight limp, and smoked cigars, usually Phillies.

by **Mumia Abu-Jamal**

Although short, he wasn't slight, but was powerfully built, with a thickness, not a fatness, of form. His voice was deep, with the accents of the South wrapped around each word, sweet and sticky like molasses. His words often tickled his sons, and they tossed them among themselves like prizes found in the depths of Crackerjack boxes, words that were wondrous in their newness, their rarity, their difference from all others heard.

"Boys—cut out that tusslin', heah me?" And the boys would stop their rasslin', their bellies near bursting with swallowed, swollen laughter, the word vibrating, *sotto voce*, barely heard, in their throats. "Tusslin'?!?"

"Tusslin'—tusslin'—tusslin'—tusslin'!"

"Tusslin'!"

For days—for weeks, these silly little boys had a new toy, and with this one word, could reduce the others to

teary-eyed fits of fall-on-the-floor laughter.

"Tusslin'!"

He was a relatively old man when he seeded those sons, and because of his age of more than half a century, he was openly affectionate in a way not usual for a man of his time. He kissed them, dressed them and taught them, by

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NOLEN EDMONSON